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

OCTOBER 2012

CALVET ENCOURAGES VETS, ACTIVE MILITARY TO REGISTER AND VOTE!

The November 6 General Election is just around the corner. The California Department of Veterans Affairs is coordinating with the California Secretary of State to encourage veterans, active duty military, employees and their families to vote.

“Veterans have protected our right to vote from the time this country was formed,” said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett. “Men and women are standing the line to defend that right today, and we should all honor their sacrifice and service by voting on November 6.”

The last day to register to vote in the General Election is October 22, 2012. Registration is easy.



If you have a California Driver License, you can register online at www.registertovote.ca.gov/. Active military personnel who are California residents serving out of state or deployed overseas are encouraged to participate. You may also register to vote at your County Elections Office. To find an office near you, visit www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm.

Polls will be open on Election Day, November 6, 2012, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Registered voters who cannot make it to the polls on Election Day, can vote by mail. To do so, complete and print an application found at www.sos.ca.gov/elections_m.htm. Mail your application in time to arrive at your County's Elections

Office no later than October 30, 2012. Deployed military personnel should do so immediately so that their ballots can reach them and be returned in time to be counted.

For more information call, the Secretary of State's voter hotline at (800) 345-VOTE or visit www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-in-california.

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Secretary's Message

September was a good month for veterans at the State Capitol! Governor Brown signed into law 18 bipartisan bills that will make it easier for veterans and their families to get an education, secure meaningful employment, and access the benefits they've earned through military service. You can read more about those new laws and see which ones may affect you in this issue of the CalVet Newsletter.

This month is also an important one for female veterans. On October 4th, CalVet and Deputy Secretary for Women Veterans Affairs Lindsey Sin, the California Research Bureau, the VetFund Foundation hosted the Women Veterans Leadership Conference, "A Call to Service, a Call to Action," at the Sacramento Double Tree Hotel. In planning for more than a year, this conference brought together a host of talented individuals to offer inspiration, motivation, and guidance to anyone interested in starting a business or nonprofit, organizing a women veterans' stand down, or taking a leadership role in their communities for the benefit of California women veterans.

Conference keynote speaker was Zoe Dunning. Dunning, a retired Navy Commander, is one of the first military members to be prosecuted under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" official policy that excluded gays from serving openly in the U.S. Armed Forces. She made history fighting and winning repeal of that policy. Her keynote address was inspiring and motivational!

In addition, Woman Veteran Leader of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, and Outstanding Volunteer awardees will be named. Individuals who displayed exemplary leadership in their communities and outstanding service to veterans were nominated. Look for a CalVet news release once the awardees have been announced.

CalVet is very grateful to conference sponsors PG&E, VetFund Foundation, Wells Fargo Bank, Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, Ashford University, and Union Institute & University for their support.

As Veterans Day nears, please give some thought to how you and your family will honor the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. One important way to pay homage is by exercising your right to vote. That is a right secured for us by our brave veterans and protected for us by U.S. military personnel all over the world.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Gravett, Major General (Ret)
Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs

NEW LAWS BENEFIT CA VETS, FAMILIES

Governor Brown recently signed into law several bipartisan bills that improve services and opportunities for veterans in California. These new laws enhance, extend or create opportunities that make getting an education, securing meaningful employment, and accessing benefits earned through military service easier for veterans and their families.

Specifically, these new laws:

- give veterans academic credit for certain prior military academic experience (AB 2462);
- increase the number of years after leaving active duty California veterans are eligible for California college priority registration (AB 2133);
- expand the current exemption given to veterans from paying non-resident tuition at California community colleges (AB 2478);
- expedite the professional and vocational licensure process for military spouses and domestic partners of certain active-duty military members (AB 1904);
- allow accountants to have their licenses placed on military inactive status while engaged in armed forces or National Guard active duty (SB 1405);
- allow licensed drivers of military commercial vehicles to qualify for a California commercial driver's license without additional California driving tests (AB 2659);
- allow the Adjutant General to establish support programs, acquire facilities and solicit and accept donations for the benefit of military personnel and their families (SB 1413);
- provide restorative relief to a veteran defendant who acquires a criminal record due to a mental disorder stemming from military service (AB 2371);
- authorize regulations necessary to allow financing of cooperative dwelling units (AB 1224);
- reinstate state veterans benefits that were denied solely on the basis of sexual orientation when the federal government first reinstates those benefits (AB 1505);
- allow a reduced fee sport fishing license for active military personnel who are recovering service members (SB 1287);
- allow a reduced-fee hunting license for military personnel who are recovering service members (SB 1288);
- develop policies to assist veteran inmates in pursuing veterans benefits (AB 2490);
- designate the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to serve as the state's liaison with the U.S. Department of Defense (AB 342);
- increase fees required to issue, renew, and personalize

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www.calvet.ca.gov

CALVET





HONORING OUR FALLEN HEROES

With Veterans Day nearing, the thoughts of many turn to honoring the brave and selfless men and women who served in our Armed Forces—those who came home and those who did not.

Wreaths Across America is a nonprofit organization founded to continue and to expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The organization's mission—to Remember, Honor, Teach—is carried out in part by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies each December at Arlington, as well as veterans'

cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond.

In California, wreaths are placed on veteran graves in the Veterans Memorial Grove Cemetery at the Yountville Veterans Home, the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, the Los Angeles National Cemetery in Los Angeles, the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in Igo, and in 28 other cemeteries and veterans memorials in the State.

This amazing tribute is made possible by thousands of volunteers

who organize local ceremonies, raise funds to sponsor wreaths, and participate in the events. Wreaths Across America receives no government funding. The cost of its programs is paid by individual wreath sponsors, corporate donors, and volunteer truckers. Besides its wreath-laying activities, the organization also coordinates veteran services and recognition through a variety of programs and provides schools with teaching aids for projects throughout the year.

Wreaths Across America's goal is to place 500,000 wreaths on veterans graves nationwide on December 15, 2012. You can help by making a monetary donation, organizing a fundraising campaign through your local service organization, coordinating a wreath-laying ceremony, sponsoring a wreath, or volunteering to place wreaths at a participating cemetery. To learn more, go to www.wreathscrossamerica.org or call (877) 385-9504 toll free.

<< LAWS

- specialized veterans' license plates to fund veterans' organizations (AB 1550);
- allow Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children task force to reconvene and make recommendations (AB 2202);
- change county veteran service officer reporting requirements to ensure the programs are

maximizing support to veterans (AB 2198);

- require CalVet to provide veterans with information about federal veteran pensions, federal housing vouchers, and CalFresh (SB 1198).

"These bills show our commitment to serving those who have served," said California Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Peter J. Gravett. "And we should always honor and remember the service and sacrifice

of the men and women who have served this state and nation in uniform."

"This comprehensive package of legislation signed by Governor Brown continues to demonstrate that California is fulfilling its obligation to our veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much," said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, California National Guard Adjutant General.

For full text of the bills, visit: <http://leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR LIBRARY VETERAN SERVICE PROGRAM

The California Department of Veterans Affairs and the California State Library are joining forces to help California veterans get connected to the benefits and services they've earned through military service. This year-long pilot program will create a Veteran Resource Center staffed by trained volunteers in the Redding Library, the Point Loma/Hervey Branch Library in San Diego, and the Beale Memorial Library in Bakersfield.

Volunteers will undergo an intensive one-day training provided by CalVet which will include information about veterans' benefits and services, veteran reintegration challenges, listening and problem-solving skills,

and meaningful information and referral techniques. This training will prepare volunteers to answer basic benefits-related questions for veterans and their families, to offer CalVet and other appropriate veterans benefits resources, and to provide a checklist of documents and information needed when applying for benefits through the County Veterans Service Office. If successful, the pilot program could be replicated in public libraries statewide.

"Veterans are often unaware of the services available to them, confused about the benefits they are entitled to, and unsure about how to take advantage of them," said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett. "We're very excited about this program and grateful to the State Library for helping us reach and assist California veterans and their families. We're confident this program will be effective and look forward to taking it statewide."

Volunteers are sought who have an interest in serving veterans and their families, who can work a minimum of one two-hour shift per week in one of the partner libraries, and who



VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

LEARN ABOUT BENEFITS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY MAY BE ENTITLED TO.

- *EDUCATION
- *EMPLOYMENT
- *HEALTH
- *HOUSING
- *DISABILITY COMP
- *AND MORE!

CAL VET
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

STATE LIBRARY

Coming Soon!

This project was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

will make a one-year commitment to the program. To view the full Veteran Resource Center volunteer position description and complete an application, go to <http://libraries.volunteermatch.org>.

This project is supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.



VETERANS!

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CAL VET
HOME LOANS

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

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE CHILDREN OF FALLEN, WOUNDED SERVICE MEMBERS

A report released by the No Greater Sacrifice Foundation late last year revealed that \$1.2 billion is required to provide the children of fallen and combat wounded service members the opportunity to pursue post-high school education.

The Freedom's Future 2011 report, which used a proprietary economic model based on extensive analysis of government documents, macro-economic projections and educational trends, illustrates the high value and growing need

for scholarships and resources to support that cause. The analysis included an in-depth look at families from the past ten years who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn.

"Freedom's Future 2011 report outlines the number of children of our fallen and combat wounded service members and helps focus Americans on the impact of war beyond the battlefield. Our ability to have a solid understanding of

the number of children and costs associated with their education can only improve the support for our U.S. service members and their families," said Colonel David Sutherland, Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff for Warrior and Family Support.

To download the Freedom's Future 2011 report, go to www.nogreatersacrifice.org/freedomsfuture.

No Greater Sacrifice, a nonprofit foundation created in February 2008, serves the children of our nation's fallen and wounded service members. The organization delivers scholarships and resources to improve their quality of life through the pursuit of higher education.

NONSURGICAL, NON-PHARMACEUTICAL THERAPY FOR TINNITUS

The repetitive stutter of a machine gun, the shocking boom of mortars, the deafening drone of helicopter rotors and other sounds of war can leave many veterans with permanent damage to their auditory system, including hearing loss and tinnitus.

Some describe tinnitus as ringing sounds, a buzzing sound, a high-pitched whistle, or numerous other sounds. Tinnitus is the number one disability among veterans and it affects at least one in every 10 American adults. Severe tinnitus can be extremely incapacitating, causing stress, anxiety, and problems sleeping or concentrating. According to the American Tinnitus Association,

the 2011 estimated cost of annual tinnitus disability payments for war veterans was over \$1 billion.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) healthcare system consists of more than 170 medical centers and about 350 community clinics, with more facilities overseas. The number of veterans on the rolls for tinnitus was estimated to be over 800,000 in 2011.

For additional information contact your local County Veteran Service Office, Veteran Service Organization, CalVet or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

VETERANS BURIAL BENEFITS

By Ted Puntillo

We are very lucky in Solano County to be the home of a new veterans cemetery located near Dixon. The Sacramento Valley National Cemetery opened several years ago and it is now almost fully developed. It is a beautiful addition to our county! The Cemetery's friendly staff stands ready to help all veterans and their families during the stressful time surrounding the loss of a loved one.

In addition, the Cemetery always has a wonderful Memorial Day ceremony in May, a Veterans Day observance in November and a Wreaths Across America ceremony in December during which a live wreath is placed on every grave by patriotic volunteers.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) maintains 133 national cemeteries in 39 states. In California, there are nine national cemeteries, five of which are accepting new interments, including the Riverside National Cemetery, San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery, Miramar National Cemetery, Bakersfield National Cemetery and our Sacramento Valley National Cemetery. The other national cemeteries are only accepting burials of family members of persons already interred. There is also a beautiful state veterans' cemetery in Igo,

California, which is close to Redding. This cemetery is fairly new and is accepting all qualified veteran burial requests.

The USDVA and the California Department of Veteran Affairs provide certain burial benefits for qualified veterans and their dependents. Those benefits include burial plot, grave marker, military honors, burial flag and some reimbursement for qualified veterans funeral and burial expenses.

People eligible for burial include veterans, service members who die on active duty, certain reservists and National Guard members who have been deployed on title federal orders and have a DD-214, World War II Merchant Mariners and certain others who have served in Allied Forces who supported our Armed Forces in a war. Eligibility is determined by the national cemetery staff. Sacramento Valley National Cemetery may be reached at (707) 693-2460 for questions on eligibility.

Certain spouses and children are eligible for burial too, depending on the circumstances. Spouses of veterans can be buried first at no charge if they pre-decease the veteran, and the married couple may be buried in the same grave on top of each other.

Burial benefits at a national cemetery include the plot, opening and closing, the vault (if needed), the grave marker and military honors if requested. There is no charge for

MILITARY FUNERAL PROTESTS RESTRICTED

Legislation has been passed that will help protect grieving families of fallen soldiers from harassment at their loved ones' funerals. That legislation bans picketing two hours before and after a funeral service and requires protesters to stay 300 feet away from grieving families. The legislation is part of "The Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012."

The legislation came in response to the 2011 Supreme Court ruling that a grieving father's pain over mocking protests at his Marine son's funeral are protected by free speech guaranteed under the First Amendment.

That ruling ended a lawsuit by Albert Snyder, who sued members of Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas for the emotional pain they caused when they showed up at his Marine son's funeral holding signs with inflammatory messages, including "Thank God for dead soldiers," "God Hates the USA/ Thank God for 9/11," and others. The fundamentalist group contends that God is killing U.S. soldiers

<< BURIAL

any of the aforementioned services. Usually only the discharge or DD-214 and death certificate is necessary to make burial arrangements with the national cemetery.

Military honors are provided if the arrangements are made ahead of time. Usually, the funeral home will take care of contacting the casualty branch of the service in which the veteran served.

Reimbursement for funeral arrangements, cremation, casket or services provided by a funeral may be paid if the veteran was receiving benefits from the USDVA, typically, either compensation for a service-connected disability or veteran pension.

The USDVA will pay up to \$300 for funeral and burial expenses and \$700 for the plot allowance if the veteran is receiving monetary benefits from the USDVA at the time of death. If the veteran is buried in the national cemetery, there is no reimbursement for the plot. This plot allowance only applies if the veteran is buried in a private cemetery. If the veteran dies of a service-connected condition, the USDVA will pay up to \$2,000 of the paid funeral bills to the person who paid the funeral expenses.

Veterans being buried in private cemeteries may order a veterans grave marker at no charge from the USDVA. There are several types available to order. There is usually a charge from the cemetery to place the marker.

The veteran's family may also order a presidential memorial certificate signed by the current president to honor the memory of the honorably discharged veteran. Our office can also order these for the family members.

For more information about veterans' burial or other benefits and for assistance applying for these benefits, contact your County Veteran Service Office. To locate the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org. Click on "Contact Us," and then click on your county of residence.

Ted Puntillo is director of Veteran Services for Solano County.

<< PROTESTS

because of the military's tolerance of homosexuality.

In the wake of the ruling, communities have come together to block Westboro's demonstrations. In Missouri, thousands of people came together to form a "human wall" around a church in which a military funeral was being held. Texas A&M students did something similar to protect a grieving military family's service.

Unfortunately, church protesters claim the new law won't deter them. "That's really not going to change our plans at all," Westboro Baptist Church spokesman Steve Drain told CNN. "We're going to continue to do that. We're also going to continue to obey all laws."

TAX CREDITS FOR EMPLOYERS THAT HIRE VETERANS

By Ted Puntillo

Last November, President Obama signed into law the Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 that amended and expanded the definition of veteran target groups for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. Employers only have a few months left to take advantage of this program, as the changes and new provisions in the act only apply to individuals who start work by January 1, 2013.

A Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to private-sector businesses and certain non-profit organizations for hiring certain individuals, including veterans, who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. The WOTC program enables the targeted employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income, while participating employers are able to reduce their federal income tax liability.

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act extended and expanded the tax credit as it applies to veterans. If used to its fullest, employers can receive between \$2,400 and \$9,600 in tax

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FROM BAD TO WORSE: SECONDARY SERVICE CONNECTION DISABILITIES

By Joe Wright

For some veterans, a service-connected disability is not the end of their medical woes. Take, for example, a veteran whose service-connected right knee disability resulted in a pronounced limp which ultimately caused a left hip disability.

When a service-connected condition directly or indirectly causes a new disability or merely makes a pre-existing or non-service connected disability worse, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) can rule that the new disability is service-connected as well.

The new disability will be treated as if it were a result of the veteran's military service and will be evaluated for a separate disability compensation rating. If a disability that existed prior to a service-connected disability has been aggravated by a service-connected disability, the pre-existing disability may be ruled service-connected and assigned a rating that reflects the extent to which that disability has increased in severity due to the service-connected disability.

Veterans will be unsuccessful in this type of claim without sufficient

medical evidence of the link, or nexus, between the service-connected disability and the medical condition that the veteran is attempting to characterize as a secondary service-connected disability. The standard is to produce sufficient medical evidence to show that it is "as likely as not" that the second condition was caused or aggravated by the first condition. To establish this to the satisfaction of the USDVA, veterans will most certainly need at least one medical expert opinion.

For answers to your veterans benefits questions or help filing a claim, contact your County Veterans Service Office (CVSO). For the CVSO nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org, click on "Contact Us," and then click on your county of residence.

<< EMPLOYERS

credits by hiring veterans meeting various criteria, including veterans who:

- receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) benefits,
- have a service-connected disability and are hired within one year of discharge or release from active duty, and
- have a service-connected disability and have been unemployed for at least six months.

An employer who hires an eligible veteran can expect to recoup up to

50 percent of the veteran's salary during the incentive period. This reimbursement can also cover the added costs of bringing on new employees, including the cost of instruction, the loss of production or the additional supplies and equipment required during the training period.

Equally as important, hiring a veteran shows our nation's military that you are a supporter and have faith in the people who serve our country.

Veterans benefit too. There's the immediate income from being employed as a result of the employer incentive. They also gain valuable skills that build on their military experience, but in

a practical setting that meets the employer's specifications. Based on good performance, the acquired skills and the economic climate of the employer, the veterans gain an opportunity for continued employment beyond the incentive program. Veterans can also get support from Veterans Administration vocational rehabilitation counselors, if applicable, or from the employment counselors at local one-stop career centers.

For more information WOTC tax credits, contact California's WOTC Coordinator at (866) 593-0173 (Toll Free).

PUTTING AMERICA'S HEROES BACK TO WORK

By Jeanne Bonfilio

When America's servicemen and servicewomen left their homes and families to serve their country, many also left great jobs behind. What better way could there be to thank a transitioning service member, wounded warrior or veteran, than to offer them gainful and meaningful employment upon their return? One could scarcely think of anything better. Let's put America's heroes back to work!

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) encourages all hiring business and agencies to include transitioning service members, veterans and wounded warriors in their recruitment and hiring decisions.

These men and women bring unique skills and experience to the workforce. Their strong work ethic and goal-oriented mindset make them excellent, loyal and dedicated employees. They also bring with them strong teamwork, communications and leadership skills, to name a few.

According to Veterans Today Magazine, the top ten reasons to hire



Veterans are as follows:

- "Accelerated Learning Curve: Veterans have the proven ability to learn new skills and concepts. In addition, they can enter your workforce with identifiable and transferable skills, proven in real world situations. This background can enhance your organization's productivity.
- "Leadership: The military trains people to lead by example as well as through direction, delegation, motivation and inspiration. Veterans understand the practical ways to manage behaviors for results, even in the most trying circumstances. They also know the dynamics of leadership as part of both hierarchical and peer structures.
- "Teamwork: Veterans understand how genuine teamwork grows out of a responsibility to one's colleagues. Military duties involve a blend of individual and group productivity. They also necessitate a perception of how groups of all sizes relate to each other and an overarching objective.
- "Diversity and Inclusion in Action: Veterans have learned to work side by side with individuals regardless of diverse race, gender, geographic origin, ethnic background, religion and economic status as well as mental, physical and attitudinal capabilities. They have the sensitivity to cooperate with many different types of individuals.
- "Efficient performance under pressure: Veterans understand the rigors of tight schedules and limited resources. They have developed the capacity to know how to accomplish priorities on time, in spite of tremendous stress. They know the critical importance of staying with a task until it is done right.
- "Respect for procedures: Veterans have gained a unique perspective on the value of accountability. They can grasp their place within

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<< HEROES

an organizational framework, becoming responsible for subordinates' actions to higher supervisory levels. They know how policies and procedures enable an organization to exist.

- "Technology and globalization: Because of their experiences in the service, veterans are usually aware of international and technical trends pertinent to business and industry. They can bring the kind of global outlook and technological savvy that all enterprises of any size need to succeed.
- "Integrity: Veterans know what it means to do "an honest day's work." Prospective employers can take advantage of a track record of integrity, often including security clearances. This integrity translates into qualities of sincerity and trustworthiness.
- "Conscious of health and safety standards: Thanks to extensive training, veterans are aware of health and safety protocols both

for themselves and the welfare of others. Individually, they represent a drug-free workforce that is cognizant of maintaining personal health and fitness. On a company level, their awareness and conscientiousness translate into protection of employees, property and materials.

- "Triumph over adversity: In addition to dealing positively with the typical issues of personal maturity, Veterans have frequently triumphed over great adversity. They likely have proven their mettle in mission-critical situations demanding endurance, stamina and flexibility. They may have overcome personal disabilities through strengths and determination."

Over 1.9 million veterans call California home. Another 30,000 men and women separate from military service and return to the State each year. With the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, an additional 6,000 to 8,000 veterans are expected to return to California every year for the next couple of years.

President Obama has publicly challenged the private sector to hire 100,000 veterans by the end of 2012. CalVet urges employers that honor and support veterans to hire a veteran today!

The California Employment Development Department can help employers and veteran job seekers connect. If you are an employer looking to hire veterans, go to www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/Services_for_Veterans.htm#EmployerResourcestoHireVeterans. If you are a California veteran looking for a job, go to http://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/Services_for_Veterans.htm. Veterans may also contact their County Veterans Services Officer (CVSO) about employment resources. To find the CVSO nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org and click on "Contact Us."

If you are a California employer interested in simple, no-cost ways to work with CalVet for the benefit of veterans and veteran families already on staff, please contact CalVet at PAO@CalVet.ca.gov.

VFW HOSTS SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

For more than 60 years, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has supported the education of our country's most

promising and talented students by giving impressive scholarships.

VFW is again conducting its Voice of Democracy scholarship competition, which is open to students in grades 9 through 12. Students who wish to enter must submit an audio essay to a VFW Post by November 1, 2012. First prize is a \$30,000 scholarship paid directly to the American college,

university or vocational/technical school of the student's choice.

For more information about the scholarship competition, to view last year's winning video essay, or to download the entry form, go to http://heroes.vfw.org/site/MessageViewer?em_id=21441.0&dli_id=33781.

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

SEMINARS TARGET VETS WITH UNWISE INVESTMENTS

By Sid Kirchheimer | from: AARP Bulletin | October, 2010

At community centers, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, their spiel to older veterans goes something like this: We can get you instant eligibility for additional benefits through a quick overhaul of your investments. These self-described “veterans advocates” are in fact unscrupulous investment advisers.

“They say that if you purchase financial products through us, we’ll make you eligible” for Department of Veterans Affairs pensions and other benefits, says Joe Foster, administrator of Montana’s Veteran Affairs Division, which recently helped form a task force to combat this growing scam against vets.

The usual pitch involves getting a veteran to transfer retirement assets into an irrevocable trust so that the family appears to be impoverished. This helps it meet eligibility requirements for a VA pension and related programs such as Aid and Attendance, which pays an additional benefit to veterans who need assistance with everyday living.



As the salesmen explain it, the VA doesn’t “look back” to examine veterans’ asset histories in determining eligibility for a pension.

Although it’s true that the VA doesn’t examine why you may be a millionaire one day and appear poverty-stricken the next, “Medicaid does look back,” Foster says. “And when they see you’ve transferred your assets in this manner, it could jeopardize your eligibility for those benefits.”

SCRAMBLED NEST EGG

The bigger concern is that the new trust usually contains annuities, long-term investments that are often considered inappropriate for older retirees. Some annuities must be held for a decade or longer before they pay out a monthly income.

Nevertheless, they are recommended by unscrupulous salesmen because they generate high sales commissions. A \$500,000 annuity, for instance, could yield the agent \$75,000 for just a few hours of work, says Neil Granger, a California consultant on investment scams and financial abuse of older people.

Other investments pitched by these salesmen at “free lunch” seminars are

completely bogus. They just take the money and run.

PROTECTION DETECTION

If you’re a vet, here’s what else you should know:

- Don’t be fooled by official-sounding names. Some sales agents operate as, or work with, “front” organizations, falsely claiming they have a veteran affiliation and nonprofit status.
- Don’t depend on nursing homes, community centers and assisted living facilities to protect you. They may be unaware of the shady nature of the seminars. Often they are paid a fee to let volunteers give presentations.
- Get credible information on how to qualify for veterans benefits by contacting your state veterans affairs agency at nasdva.net.
- Before investing, check the agent’s record at your state regulatory office. For a list, visit www.nasaa.org/about-us/contact-us/contact-your-regulator/.

Reprinted with permission | AARP Bulletin. Sid Kirchheimer is the author of *Scam-Proof Your Life* (AARP Books/Sterling).

PUTTING OUT THE WELCOME MAT FOR YOUNG VETERANS

By Ron Brand

They are brightening up VFW Post 67 on Stockton Blvd in Sacramento and putting out the welcome sign. The Vietnam Veterans have moved into leadership. They pledged to not repeat the situations and perceptions that drove them away from veterans service organizations in mass when they returned from their war.

When the 2,709,918 Americans who served in Vietnam returned home, many felt unwelcomed by the veterans of previous wars. Instead of joining established organizations, they went out and started their own organization, Vietnam Veterans of America, which still thrives today.



The new leadership knows that another occurrence of young veterans starting their own organizations instead of joining established groups will spell the end to long-serving organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The American Legion, AmVets, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and others. They are going out of their way to let the new veterans know that they are welcomed.

"The VFW has to change to meet the needs of the Xbox generation," said Bobby Price, the Past Commander of the VFW Department of California, in

a the San Diego Union Tribune article printed on July 27, 2011.

Post 67 is not unique. This is happening all over the country. The leadership of veterans service organizations has passed on to a new generation. This generation is committed to continuing the veteran service organizations for those who were called to the Mideast and for those that may be called in the future.

So, in Post 9327 in Santee, California, they are adding WiFi, Xboxes, big

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SOLANO COUNTY ISSUES VETERAN DISCOUNT ID CARDS

The Solano County Veteran Service Office will issue veteran ID cards that can be used to take advantage of hundreds of discounts offered to veterans by local and national retailers. These cards will be offered at the Solano County Event Center at 675 Texas Street, #4700 in Fairfield, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., October 9-12, 2012.

Honorably discharged veterans MUST bring their Honorable Discharge DD214 form to get an ID card and a list of participating veteran discount establishments. Veterans who complete a simple form can also get an evaluation (either on site or later) of the federal, state, and county benefits they have earned through their military service. Veteran service

organizations will also be present to offer information about their organizations.

For more information about the event, call the Solano County Veteran Service Office at (707) 784-6590.

<< WELCOME

screen TVs, starting to take credit and debit cards and repainting. Many Posts have brightened up the bar, added Monday Night Football and are concentrating on family-friendly events. They are opening their doors to the student veterans organizations and letting them use the Post for their off-campus meetings.

On a National level, The American Legion, the VFW, and the DAV

are upgrading their websites and offering young veteran specific content. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), through its hospitals and benefits offices, have leaped online with 150 Facebook pages, 75 Twitter feeds and have a combined total of nearly 640,000 friends and followers. The DAV has recruited actor Gary Sinise and launched a series of outreach messages directed at young veterans.

But the current leadership shares many of the same problems that the World War II veterans had recruiting Vietnam veterans when they returned. Younger veterans are starting families, going to school, hectically establishing their post-military lives and are just too busy to be joiners. Time is precious, and there is no extra time to sit through meetings and deal with established

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USDVA BRIEFS

VA FILLS FIRST PHASE OF VETERANS RETRAINING PROGRAM TO ENHANCE JOB SKILLS

The Department of Veterans Affairs has approved applications for all 45,000 slots available in fiscal year (FY) 2012 under the successful Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) and is in the process of approving applications for a total of 54,000 slots available in FY 2013.

<http://1.usa.gov/RBntG6>

VA COMPLETES OVER 1 MILLION COMPENSATION CLAIMS IN 2012

VA announced today that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), which oversees the delivery of disability compensation and other benefits to the nation's Veterans, processed over one million disability claims during fiscal year 2012, marking the third year in row VBA claims processors have exceeded the one million mark.

<http://1.usa.gov/VsSeOm>

INDUSTRY RECOGNIZES VA CAMPAIGNS FOR RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS FOR VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Two U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs public awareness campaigns designed to help Veterans who seek mental health care assistance have received forty-three industry and association awards for communication and design excellence.

<http://1.usa.gov/RypiOq>

VA APPROVES \$28 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

VA has approved \$28.4 million in grants to fund 38 projects in 25 states and the District of Columbia that will provide transitional housing to homeless Veterans. Among these 38 projects, 31 will provide temporary housing to homeless Veterans with the goal that they will retain the residence as their own. <http://1.usa.gov/UdOsrr>

IMPACT OF VBA'S NEW CHALLENGE TRAINING PROGRAM

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has developed a comprehensive and integrated Transformation Campaign Plan to achieve our 2015 goal of eliminating the disability claims backlog and processing all claims at a 98 percent quality level. Along with improved processes and technologies, investment in our people is a key component of VBA's transformation to

a 21st Century organization.

<http://1.usa.gov/RyDxOM>

VA PUBLISHES DRAFT STRATEGY PLAN FOR WOMEN VETS

VA's Women Veterans Task Force has developed a comprehensive action plan to focus on resolving critical issues facing women Veterans. View the 2012 Draft Report: Strategies for Serving Our Women Veterans here:

<http://1.usa.gov/K73JCn>

VA GULF WAR TASK FORCE REPORT RELEASED

VA has released the second in a series of annual reports from its Gulf War Veterans Illnesses Task Force, outlining how the department will address the concerns of Veterans deployed during the Gulf War of 1990-1991. The report focuses on efforts to improve the delivery of health care for Gulf War Veterans, including the launch of a prototype clinical care model specifically for Gulf War Veterans. View the complete report here

<http://1.usa.gov/GR4wdK>

<< WELCOME

ritual, no time to drive across town to meet with fellow veterans, when they can communicate with them over the Internet.

The concern of the falling membership figures, is not isolated to just veterans service organizations. It is shared by many organizations—from churches to civic groups, like the Jaycees and Rotarians, and many other institutions.

“By and large, we are no longer a nation of joiners,” stated Voice of America’s Ted Landphair, in his article “PLEASE Join!! Service Clubs Plead for Members.” So, the challenge for veterans’ organizations is one amplified by changes in the society.

When San Diegan Chris Hanson was serving in the Navy off the coast of Somalia in 2006-07, he says he and his fellow sailors didn’t view VFW in a favorable light. “The general impression was that it is just a bar full of old drunks who happen to be veterans,” said Hanson, membership chairman of Post 9327 in Santee, California.

But in Chris’ leadership role in the Grossmont College Student Veteran Organization (SVO) in El Cajon, he visited a local VFW Post, and his perception began to change. He was looking for a place to hold off-campus meetings when they encountered Post 9327 “tucked back in the corner” of a strip mall.

“We walked in expecting a hostile reaction, but we were received

warmly and everyone was friendly to us,” Hanson said. “I spoke with the commander at the time, and she agreed to let us hold our SVO meetings at the Post.”

Throughout the semester, Hanson and his fellow young veterans got to know the Post members and liked what they saw.

“All of us who were eligible joined the Post and now, two years later, the SVO still holds its meetings there,” Hanson said. “Those of us who were SVO officers are now very active Post members. One is currently a trustee.”

Current Post Commander Terry Poe, a Vietnam War veteran, says “the relationship between the SVO and our Post has worked out great.” Along with Hanson, four other veterans of the current wars are on the Post’s Membership Committee.

Now, out of the Post’s 536 members, about 75 are Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans. Post Senior Vice Commander Mike Ensign is a Persian Gulf War veteran.

As past Commander Price indicated, the younger veterans are a different generation; they were raised on computers and prefer instant communications. Communications means texting. and waiting for a Post Newsletter is a waste of time. The new veterans live in a 24/7 virtual world, and to accommodate that change in lifestyle, the veterans service organizations, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, the USDVA, and many other providers have moved on to the Web.

So how does the typical brick-and-mortar, veterans’ organization fit in? The VSOs are counting on the same thing that drew them to the VSOs—the need for camaraderie, which they are addressing, and the call to service.

In answer to a Sacramento Bee article published September 2, 2012, VFW Department of California State Adjutant/Quartermaster Jim Rowoldt said, “Veterans groups have trouble signing up younger members.”

“It is important to remember all of the positive things that the Veterans of Foreign Wars is doing to reach a new generation of veterans,” stated Rowoldt, former Director of Membership for 9 years at our National Headquarters in Kansas City.

“Most importantly, the VFW has made job training and placement a priority through programs such as its National Employment Assistance Service and partnerships with universities with programs specifically for veterans. The VFW also assists young veterans by supporting legislation that makes it is easier for them to find jobs after military service such as a recent bill that streamlined the certification process for veterans who were truck drivers in the military. This is a good start, but as the needs of veterans continue to change, veterans groups need to change also. In the end it is about helping veterans of all generations.”

<< WELCOME

Service is how Chris Hanson arrived at the VFW's door. He went to the Post where the service officer who assisted him in completing his USDVA Claim was a member.

Service is not unique to the VFW. All of the veterans service organizations offer some level of service to veterans, either through being directly involved in the USDVA claims process to through other programs that assist veterans at the veterans' homes, in hospitals, or provide transportation to and from medical appointments. For this to continue, new members are required. By providing these services, younger veterans are drawn to the organization and eventually become involved themselves.

According to Rob Jackson, Commandant Marine Corps League Department of California, the Marine Corps League is having some success in bringing in younger members in various ways, but one of the important ways he cites is service:

- The League, throughout the country, works closely with Reserve Units and Recruiters. We cooperate in many ways, particularly with Toys for Tots.

Marine poolies often help the League waiting on tables at Marine Corps Birthday events, for example.

- The League attends active Marine deployment meetings giving information to Marines deploying overseas regarding aid and assistance to families. We do the same thing for returning Marines.

In answer to the question, why should young veterans join, Commandant Jackson replied, "The politics of veterans, like the politics of every other group with a common cause, is the politics of numbers. Just because young veterans want better health care or feel that they have earned it or were promised it, does not guarantee it. Votes and collective action have won veterans throughout the ages the benefits that they enjoy, from basic medical care, disability and dependent benefits, and all other benefits were not gifts but the result of hard won political battles undertaken by groups of veterans and their advocates."

So, they are putting out the "Welcome Mat" at the veterans' service organizations for the newly returning veterans. It will be a matter of time before it is known whether the young veterans will actually join.

This article is the result of information from:

Sacramento Bee

<http://www.sacbee.com/2012/09/02/4779326/veterans-groups-have-trouble-signing.html>

The Washington Post

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/higher-education/iraq-afghanistan-vets-are-congregating-online-and-va-veterans-groups-are-following-them/2012/09/07/c18c2cd6-f909-11e1-a93b-7185e3f88849_story_1.html

The San Diego Union

<http://web.utsandiego.com/news/2011/jul/27/vfw-wi-fi-microbrews-attract-young-vets/>

The VFW Newsletter

http://digitaledition.qwinc.com/display_article.php?id=659838

Voice of America

<http://blogs.voanews.com/tedlandphairsamerica/2012/08/30/join-the-club-please>

CORRECTION

An article titled, "College Fee Waiver for Disabled Veterans' Dependents" in the CalVet September 2012 Newsletter incorrectly listed the 2012 national poverty level dollar amount. The 2012 national poverty level is \$11,702. To qualify for a college fee waiver, the child's annual income may not exceed that limit.



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

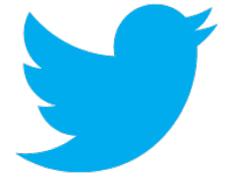
The Veterans Home of California—Barstow enjoys the strong support from the local community as well as camaraderie from the neighboring Marine Corps Logistics Base and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin.

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**

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UPCOMING EVENTS



OCTOBER 11

Kern County Homeless Veterans Stand Down

Stramler Park, Bakersfield
Contact: Deborah Johnson
(661) 695-3226

OCTOBER 16

Government Career/Expungement Workshop

VA Long Beach Healthcare System,
Long Beach
Contact: Kay Kim (562) 826-5593 or
cailine.kim@va.gov

OCTOBER 18

McClellan County Honor A Hero Hire A Vet Job and Resource Fair

Lions Gate Hotel, 3410 Westover Street,
McClellan, CA
Contact: Mary Renteria
Mary.Renteria@edd.ca.gov

OCTOBER 25-28

North Valley Stand Down

Shasta District Fairgrounds, Anderson
Contact: Terry Mikesell, 530-221-6248

OCTOBER 29-30

3rd Annual Department of Navy Wounded Warrior Hiring Conference

Manchester Grand Hyatt, San Diego
Visit: www.navsea.navy.mil/WoundedWarrior.aspx

*NOTE: TO VIEW FULL CALENDAR, VISIT
WWW.CALVET.CA.GOV/FILES/EVENTS_CALENDAR.PDF*

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