

# CALIFORNIA VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION



# THE ALLIANCE

1400 Easton Dr., Suite 102, Bakersfield, CA 93309 661-695-3626 www.cavaf.org

Spring 2014

WE ARE KERN COUNTY'S ONLY VETERANS SPECIFIC HOMELESS PROGRAM

## CVAF HELPS LOCAL VETERAN RECEIVE CAR



The week before Memorial Day was pretty typical at the Administrative Office until we received a phone call from an organization called American Warrior Customs. One of the founding members of this local nonprofit, Tracy Harrelson, explained that they were in the process of fixing up a 2001 Cadillac Deville and did we know of a veteran in our community that could benefit from the car. The criterion was a veteran in need who had young children. CVAF President/CEO immediately said "yes" that we would be able to find someone that they were looking for. The request went out to all of our program staff and several names came up, but the one that stood out the most was a veteran named Merwin S., recommended by Resource and Referral Case Manager Crissey Pannel.

Merwin began his military career in the United States Navy in 1999. He was

stationed at Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego, California for three years, where he did base maintenance and new construction. He then continued his military career in the California Army National Guard in 2004 as an Infantryman.

Merwin deployed to Iraq with his National Guard unit in 2005 to Abu Ghraib Prison where he received an avulsion fracture to his right leg while going for cover during a mortar attack. Merwin continued to serve on his fractured leg for the next three months. After the third month, the fracture was not healing and progressively getting worse; Merwin was transported to Fort Lewis, Washington where they stabilized the ankle so that Merwin would not lose the ability to walk.

Merwin continued to serve in the National Guard until 2008. Merwin is continuously battling pain and mobility problems. Despite the doctors' best attempts at stimulating the bone to grow and heal properly, Merwin is awaiting a final decision later this month on a possible amputation of his right leg.

Regardless of the personal barriers that

Merwin faces every day, he is always there for his family. He recently paid to move his daughter and two grandchildren (ages two and three) from Colorado to Bakersfield so they could live with him. Merwin could not bear to see them struggle any longer. Therefore he took the stress on his own shoulders so that his family would be safe. Merwin is a kind and selfless person.

Just recently his wife asked me if I knew where they would be able to find a car for no more than \$1,000. I worried that if they were to find a vehicle for that amount, it would not be reliable enough for their transportation needs.

The presentation of the car was held on May 24th at the Kern County Raceway during the Armed Forces 150. Merwin was named the Grand Marshall of the race and while he was on the track getting ready to say the notorious words, "Gentleman, start your engines!" American Warrior Customs presented him with the car.

Congratulations, Merwin! We know you will put this vehicle to good use!

*A special thanks to Jon Hall and Tracy Harrelson with American Warrior Customs for the donation of the car.*

## BPD SQUAD CAR – THE NEW ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN KERN COUNTY

When one thinks of homelessness and the police, they usually picture tickets being issued and arrests being made. That is all being changed here in Kern County! Local law enforcement agencies have stepped up to the challenge of ending the cycle of homelessness. Instead of criminalizing it, each department has developed new and innovative ways to address the needs of this population.

The Bakersfield Police Department launched a foot beat unit, which is comprised of officers that patrol the downtown and old town Kern areas. This allows them to get to know the business owners, local residents and homeless population on a personal basis. Officer Jason White shared with 23 ABC news his thoughts on this new project. "When I hit the streets, I'm not on a mission to make

the next arrest, but to make a difference."

The Kern County Sheriff's Department has developed a new program for incarcerated veterans, which has only been open for two weeks. This program is designed to allow veterans to be housed together in their own housing unit, and there are currently 31 veteran inmates residing in this program today. This program is designed to help the veteran's transition out of incarceration and back into the normal everyday life in the civilian world. This is accomplished by linking them to services such as mental health, employment and training, veteran's benefits and discharge planning.

With the new trends in the way our local law enforcement agencies are approaching veteran homelessness, CVAF is excited to be a small part of this big change. Our

community is truly working together in all facets to ensure every veteran is referred for services and linked with the appropriate agencies. CVAF Executive Director Heather Kimmel states, "It is an exciting time to be working in this field, to watch local law enforcement ban together with providers for the common goal of helping end the cycle of homelessness."



## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Anyone that works in the veteran's arena knows that policy is just like the weather...if you wait 10 minutes... it will change. The

year 2014 truly has "come in like a lion"; from the decrease in veteran homelessness through the Point in Time count to the temporary moratorium placed on VA funded programs and the resignation of VA Secretary Shinseki. The year isn't even half over yet, so it makes us all wonder what will be in store.

What we do know is this:

1. "Housing First" and "Harm Reduction" are two housing models that will need

to be incorporated into our communities. These models have been viewed as very controversial, but very effective in housing chronically homeless populations, including veterans.

2. Coordination among local, state and federal agencies are more critical than ever to bridge the gaps in services. We have all seen on a federal level the cooperation amongst the Veterans Administration, the Department of Labor and the Housing of Urban Development, and the expectation is that all communities will follow suit.

3. Coordinated assessment strategies must be incorporated into each Continuum of Care

to help veterans move through the system faster, reduce the number of new entries into homelessness and improve data collection and quality by providing accurate information on the type of assistance veterans need.

4. The deadline of the "5 Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness" is fast approaching and we are all striving to gain the knowledge to put new programs in place.

Through all of this, CVAF stands committed to work with each agency and develop new programs and strategies throughout Kern County. Here is to hoping the second half of the year will go out like a lamb.

## KERN COUNTY VETERANS STAND DOWN PLANNING IS UNDERWAY!

The Stand Down Committee has started meeting for the 2014 Kern County Veterans Stand Down, which will be held on Thursday, October 9th at Stramler Park in Bakersfield.

If you would like information on participating in or volunteering for the event, please contact Deborah Johnson or Heather Kimmel at 661-695-3626.

**THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 9, 2014**

**All Veterans Welcome!**

### Stramler Park

3805 Chester Avenue  
(Near Sam Lynn Ball park)

### Veterans Court

Register at CVAF by 09/26/14  
At 1120 Golden State Ave.  
(661)868-7313

### Transportation

Call (661)695-3626 or  
(888)805-2490

Gates open from: 8:00am to 3:00pm



## KERN COUNTY WOMEN VETERANS STAND UP!



The CVAF Women Veterans Advisory Committee has been extremely busy so far this year. On February 22nd, they hosted the Kern County Women Veterans Stand Up!

This was a one-day health and resource fair held at the Doubletree Hotel in Bakersfield.

Approximately 40 women attended the event with over 30 community agencies providing services such as housing, medical care, HIV screening, employment and training, mental health services, state and federal benefit assistance, Child Support, social security, massage therapy, haircuts, legal services and veteran service organizations.

*CVAF would like to extend a special thank you to Swords to Plowshares, CA Women's Law Center and Senator Diane Feinstein for their participating in and funding the event.*

**COME GET YOUR  
FIREWORKS  
AT THE  
PHANTOM FIREWORKS BOOTH**

*Happy  
4th of July*

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**Date: July 1-4**  
**North of Synfast Oil Change**  
**2821 North Chester Avenue**

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**Time: 7 am-11 pm**




Proceeds will benefit  
Rock out to Knock out RSD  
and  
The California Veterans Assistance Foundation!

## CVAF EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH RECIPIENTS

CVAF would like to acknowledge the following employees for their contributions "above and beyond" their normal job duties to receive the honor of Employee of the Month.

Each employee has shown dedication to the organization, as well as a commitment to the veterans we serve.

January	Dan Bayus, Case Manager
February	Tunisha Crite, Lead Case Manager
March	Shawn Raymond, Operations Assistant, Decatur Office
April	Regina Farrar, Administrative Assistant, Easton Office



## WALK A MILE IN MY BOOTS – THE JOURNEY FROM THERE TO HERE



The CVAF Women Veterans Advisory Committee hosted an event on May 3rd titled “Walk a Mile in My Boots”, a project supported by Mercy Hospital Arts for Healing program.

Committee member Jeannine Waits spearheaded the event and Diane Baker scouted area businesses for donations.

The concept of the project was centered on each veteran having a special relationship with their boots. The boots are a core symbol of their time in service and the connection to one’s mission. The transition from active military to civilian status can be challenging, so the workshop provided an opportunity to explore the journey, its joys and struggles, its triumphs and pitfalls, its gains and losses through a variety of creative processes.

*We would like to thank Sister Rose for leading our group and helping us collectively write a prayer to all of our fellow women veterans.*

### TAPS

*The following was a veteran resident of CVAF.*

**Timothy Thomas, U.S. Army**  
November 22, 1958 – May 22, 2014



## HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



My name is Jack C. and I come from a military family. At the age of 17, I joined the Marine Corps. I was in the Corps from 1969-1973.

I joined the Marine Corps to make my family proud and to escape an unstable family unit, wherein my parents kept getting divorces (eight times combined by the time I joined the military). This made me kind of an emotional kid/young adult.

I joined the Marine Corps for the stability and structure that it offered; something I was not getting in my family life. In the Marine Corps, I was identified as a hardworking, honest and trustworthy person. These virtues I have carried outside my service into present day; however, not everyone is perfect or without flaw.

At the age of 55, I had a moment of self-realization that I may have had a problem with alcohol. This problem was causing some unnecessary grief. It affected my job and my social relationships. I made the decision to check into the VA Westwood treatment center. I completed the Program,

got cleaned up and went right to work for a trucking company. I was on a path and my life was heading in the right direction. I worked hard for this company and was very efficient with my duties, but in 2012, I was wrongfully terminated.

At age 61, I took a hard look at my life again and wondered what went wrong, I then fell into depression and lost all my confidence. For eight months I lived in my mini-motorhome. I then returned to the VA clinic in Westwood for help a second time. While I was there, a friend told me of the CVAF in Bakersfield, California and the services that they provide for Veterans. I have no family here and no friends – just other Veterans, which is okay.

I signed up for services and began my program in October of 2013. Since I have been seeking employment, I enrolled and completed Crane Operator School and gained my certification. I now have my confidence back! My life is once again going in the right direction. I have completed almost everything that I set out to do here at CVAF and more. I am not 100 percent where I want to be in my life, but I am certainly on the right path. I owe the VA and CVAF for all the help that I got here in the program thus far!

## WELCOME TO THE CVAF TEAM, MARK MALLOS



I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. I joined the U.S. Navy with the hopes of becoming a Navy UDT/SEAL. After boot camp and “A” “school” I went to my first ship,

*The U.S.S. Bonhomme Richard* (LHD6) a multipurpose amphibious assault ship, where I was a machinist mate in the boiler room.

I met my wife (now of nine years) while in the service and have four wonderful children with her. I was honorably discharged on January 2007 and worked a series of odd jobs before moving to Bakersfield, California in 2008 as an oil worker. I worked in the oil and gas industry from 2008 till 2013.

I am currently a Case Manager/Outreach Specialist with the California Veterans Assistance Foundation and also a full-time student at the University of Phoenix where I am majoring in business.

## REGINA FARRAR ADDED TO CVAF STAFF



I have been with CVAF since June of 2013 and have been the Administrative Assistant at the Easton Street Office. Although I am not a veteran myself, I am the daughter of a Vietnam Veteran and a granddaughter of two WWII Veterans who have all passed and I am also an American Legion Auxiliary member.

I was born and raised in the Kern County area and am the mother of a 13-year-old girl (Mackenzie) and have been the Troop Leader of her Girl Scout Troop for the last six years.

We try to help as many families as we can at CVAF. It brings joy to my heart when we help a veteran and his family who are in need.

I am truly happy to work for an organization that “gives back” and that is helping veterans. Each day brings new and exciting challenges that I love.

## MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA NEWLY ELECTED JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER



The California Veterans Assistance Foundation's very own SSVF/HVRP Case Manager Chris Allen has been elected as the Department of California's Junior Vice Commander for the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

This is a huge step for Chris and he is very pleased to have been nominated and elected into office on his 29th birthday during the Department Mid-Term Convention in Clovis, California.

Chris' new position will be to assist the

Department Commander and Department Senior Vice Commander and to recruit OIF/OEF wounded Veterans who were awarded the Purple Heart while serving overseas.

As Chris stated: "I am very happy and proud of myself. I never thought in a million years I would ever be elected into a Department Officer position. I have served as Chapter 604 Senior Vice Commander since May of last year and to make Department this fast is just mind blowing. I am going to give 110% to my new position and still work very hard with CVAF and MOPH to show our Veterans that there are many resources out there to help every Veteran who is in need of help."

## MY JOURNEY FROM HOMELESS TO HVRP JOB DEVELOPER



I, Aaron Tipton served in the United States Air Force from 2000 to 2004 after signing up in the delayed enlistment program (DEP) in November of 1999 during my senior year of high school. After basic training and tech school in Texas, I was sent here to California. I served my four-year enlistment at Edwards AFB as a part of the 412th MXS Air Force Materiel Command/Test Wing.

I was tasked to the Survival Equipment career field, more commonly known as a parachute rigger. Shortly after arriving at my first duty station, I volunteered as a Security Forces Reserve Police Officer for the 95th Security Police Squadron at Edwards. During my dual role at Edwards, I had the privilege of becoming a part of the SERT team, which is the equivalent to the SWAT team for civilian police.

I again volunteered this time to be deployed to Incirlik, Turkey for an eight month TDY from November of 2002 to July 2003 in support of numerous joint missions with the British RAF, Turkish Army and Navy, as well as NATO forces (OIF, OEF, INF, ONW and OSW).

In June of 2004 I exited the Air Force for medical and family reasons and moved to Bakersfield. I never fully realized what effect walking away from my military family would have on me until stepping back into civilian life. I worked one job after another, but never truly felt the brotherhood that came from being in the Air Force.

In 2007 and after the start of a divorce, I

fell on some hard times. I struggled to keep my life together for the better part of two years until finally everything came down around me. A veteran that I had known told me about CVAF and that he was living at the Decatur location, but because of being too prideful I didn't reach out for help for almost four months. When I became homeless is when I called CVAF and realized that I needed help to get back on my feet.

I came into the program and was here for just about a year altogether. During my time here I learned a great deal about myself and discovered a passion for helping my fellow brothers and sisters in arms. After getting back out on my own, I decided to use my Post 9/11 GI Bill to go to school at the University of Phoenix for a Bachelors degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Human Services. While attending school, I heard about a position coming available at CVAF, and felt compelled to give back to the organization that gave so much to me. I have had the honor of serving as the HVRP Job Developer for the last year and look forward to helping fellow veterans far into the future.

I recently attended my graduation ceremony in April, and owe my success to my wife because of her support as well as Lee'o Whisenant for pushing me to go back to school.

In my free time I enjoy spending time with my wife and two young boys. I also continue to support the Bakersfield community while taking part in my hobby of R.C. off-road racing in which my son and I compete in benefit races for cancer and disability awareness.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Providing services takes money; foundations and corporations fight hard for a share of big federal and state grants. The California Veterans Assistance Foundation relies on the generosity of people like you to help end the national disgrace of homeless veterans who are (MIA) missing in America.

Please send your tax-deductible donations to:

**California Veterans  
Assistance Foundation, Inc.  
1400 Easton Dr., Suite 102  
Bakersfield, CA 93309**

Please help us to continue our efforts to help those veterans who need a "hand-up and not a hand-out."

## CFC Donation

94262 California Veterans Assistance  
Foundation, Inc. EIN #30000186044

Transitional housing programs with supportive services that assist veterans in identifying, treating and diminishing the issues that lead to homelessness.

**Toll-free: 888-805-2490**

## CVAF MISSION STATEMENT

*Our mission is to help veterans or at risk of becoming homeless veterans, regain, maintain, and improve their status in society by providing an alcohol and drug-free, secure environment through which a wide array of human services can be accessed in an atmosphere of dignity and mutual concern.*

## EVENT CALENDAR

CVAF will be at these events. Come and say hello!

### June 30-July 4

#### **Rock Out to Knock Out RSD Fireworks Booth**

50% of proceeds will be donated to CVAF

N. Chester Ave (just north of Universe Avenue, across from Synfast Oil Change)

### October 9

**Kern County Stand Down**  
3805 Chester Avenue  
Bakersfield, CA