

CALIFORNIA VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION



THE ALLIANCE

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

Fall 2012

WE ARE KERN COUNTY'S ONLY VETERANS SPECIFIC HOMELESS PROGRAM

KERN COUNTY VETERANS STAND DOWN



Kern County celebrated its 14th Annual Veterans Stand Down and Resource Day on October 11, 2012 at Bakersfield's Stramler Park. The day-long social services resource fair is sponsored by the California Veterans Assistance Foundation, through private donations and grants through the U.S. Department of Labor and the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

It is the second year in a row that CVAF has been at the helm of this event, which is popular among veterans – many of whom are homeless. The biggest draw to this event every year is Veterans Court, where veterans with Kern County misdemeanor fines and traffic tickets are able to get them cleared with community service.

This year, 329 veterans and 28 dependents were in attendance. The CVAF Board of

Directors (Robert Piaro, Tim Maples and Michael Hikel) manned the registration booth with help from Hill Reyes, Marlia Maples and CVAF staff Nancy Price and Rosemary Hobbs. According to Rosemary, "I had a great time working registration with the Board. Everyone worked as a team to make it a supportive environment for veterans who were attending the event."

Over 40 service providers were in attendance offering haircuts, massage therapy, backpacks, employment and housing assistance, benefits counseling, flu shots, medical screening, VA enrollment, mental health counseling, burial benefits, legal assistance, ID cards, food baskets, pet food, two hot meals and lots of camaraderie.

Next year's Stand Down date has already been set. It will be October 10, 2013.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL STAND DOWN DONORS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Donors

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Frito Lay
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Steven Garner, Boy Scout Eagle Project
California Department of Veterans Affairs
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Kern County Chapter
of the Wounded Heroes Fund
Community members/
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VFW Post 97
Daniel Loza
Steven Garner, SGC Contracting
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BS&E
Kern County Parks and Recreation
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Bronson Meyer
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of the American Red Cross

Committee Members

Deborah Johnson, Chair
Heather Kimmel, Co-Chair
Tonna Mullens/Veronique Royer,
Volunteer Coordination
Daniel Loza, Veterans' Services
Carmen Torres, Haircuts
Fran Ramirez, Clothing
Steve Reynolds, Camp Development
Ed McAlister, Camp Support
Margarita Rossun,
Service Provider Coordination
Ana Vigil, Veterans Court
Heidi Carter/Jennifer Perfect, Media
David White, Camp Signs

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES NOW AVAILABLE

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) is beginning in October! The SSVF Program promotes housing stability among very low-income Veteran families who are homeless and those who reside in, or are transitioning to, permanent housing. This is a new program operating under the auspices of CVAF. It will allow CVAF to provide services to 70 veterans and their families.

A point-in-time survey in 2011 showed that more than 67,000 veterans were homeless at that time. However, there is hope. The incidence of Veteran homelessness has fallen twelve percent since 2010. Veterans who are in danger of losing rental housing (Homeless Prevention) OR homeless Veterans in need of rental housing (Rapid Re-housing) AND very low income may be eligible.

NEW STAFF MEMBER JOINS CVAF



My name is Rosemary Hobbs and I am the new Case Manager at the Resource and Referral office. I was born and raised here in Bakersfield, and I have worked in case management for the majority of my career.

I simply enjoy helping to link other folks with the resources that will help them find success in their lives.

While I am not a veteran, I come from a family of very proud military members who were active in the Navy, Army and Marines.

When I am not in the office, I am usually out riding my motorcycles on the roads and race tracks in Kern County or I am mentoring new riders. I am happy to be a part of such a great organization and I look forward to working with many great people.

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— NEW STAFF, continued on page 4

FROM THE PRESIDENT



This quarter has been fast, furious and fabulous! It seems the first half of the year I spent grant writing, and now that they have been awarded, we are working hard at getting them established.

Between October 2011 and October 2012, CVAF has procured close to \$800,000 in grants for homeless veteran housing and supportive services, including:

- \$271,000 in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care funding for permanent supportive housing;
- \$122,000 in U.S. Department of Labor

funding for job training and community reintegration;

- \$180,000 in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs funding for Supportive Services for Veteran Families – a sort of Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program for vets; and
- \$213,000 in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs funding for “Transition in Place” and transitional to permanent supportive housing program.

With expanding services, CVAF purchased a new administrative office that houses Heather Kimmel, Caroline Two-Cats Romero and me. Attached to the office is an 800 square foot warehouse that we utilize for a donation drop off site. The National Coal-

ition for Homeless Veterans and The Home Depot Foundation hosted a Housing Summit in San Antonio in September. It featured two full days of targeted training sessions, intensive workshops and opportunities for engagement with critical partners involved in expanding the availability of permanent housing options for homeless and at-risk veterans and their families.

Last, but not least, we just wrapped up the Kern County Veterans Stand Down on October 11th. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the people that helped make this year’s Stand Down a great success. This event truly belongs to the veterans of Kern County and it is an honor to be of service.

HOME FIRST 12 PROGRAM

As CVAF continues to partner with the Kern County Homeless Collaborative (KCHC) and their efforts to end homelessness in Kern County, new opportunities to help continue to arise. In the last year, the KCHC launched the 100,000 homes campaign with a program called Home First 12 (HF12). This program focuses on housing the 12 most vulnerable and chronically homeless individuals in our community who, without this assistance, would likely die on the streets. CVAF committed to case manage three individuals through this program.

Step one of the HF12 process was to identify these individuals by hitting the streets to conduct a survey. After the surveys were collected, the information was compiled into a database that identified

the twelve most vulnerable individuals. The KCHC then gave the participating agencies the names of the individuals they were to case manage.

This program is a housing first model, which means the client is placed into housing as quickly as possible before services begin. Once their housing is stabilized, an intensive case management approach is implemented with wrap around services. CVAF is proud to say that we have successfully housed two clients. Executive Director Heather Kimmel states, “Their move in day was emotional. You felt the sense of relief that, for once, housing was no longer a concern. The realization that finally everything was going to be alright. We are so proud of our HF12 clients, and continue to be the cheerleader in their corner.”



CVAF Program Director Dennis Madrid, an HF12 client and Case Manager Ron Hernandez.



Home First 12 clients on “move in” day.

LEARNING THE ROPES!



Expanding available programs for homeless veterans in Bakersfield remains a top priority for the California Veterans Assistance Foundation. In the last year the organization has been awarded four new federal grants

to develop programs from employment and retraining to permanent supportive housing and homeless prevention. In developing so many new programs, CVAF staff realized that they had a lot to learn. So, when you have questions, who do you ask?

You go to people who have experience, expertise and have been successful

at what they do. That is exactly why Executive Director Heather Kimmel spent a week with the nationally recognized program U.S. Vets. During her week long training in Las Vegas, she learned the ins and outs of one of CVAF’s new programs called Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF). With this program, CVAF hopes to assist 70 veteran families in Kern County with homeless prevention assistance and rapid re-housing. Heather Kimmel shares her thoughts on the new program: “We will be able to step in and help people before it gets to the point of homelessness. We have an experienced case management staff that will be able to assess the veteran’s needs and link them to the resources to help them become stable in housing.”

JOBS DEVELOPMENT CORNER



CVAF is happy to announce that we received a grant through the U.S. Department of Labor, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force. Ron Hernandez is our Job Developer for this program and we are coordinating several training programs to include power, wind and solar technology, truck driving, Certified Nursing Assistance training, OJT, Guard Card certification, as well as helping veterans with barriers to employment

JOBS, continued on page 4

From the Trenches

WHAT IS VETERANS DAY AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?



My name is Roger S. I grew up in northwest Ohio. Long before I joined the U.S. Army, I was made aware of our family history and its ties to the

military. As a young boy, my mom and dad would visit our grandparents who lived in Kentucky. It was there, through my mother's Dad, that I was made aware of how important service to this country was to our entire family. My grandfather related to me that every conflict/war that the United States was involved in contained at least one member of our family throughout our history. Of the seven boys my parents raised, five of us entered military service; of that five, two were involved in a war. Our family is not unlike many other families in this great country, in that a large percentage of them can state this same fact.

To me, Veterans Day is a time to reflect back on all the men and women who have given their lives to protect the freedom that we have today. There is no honor greater in this world than to give your life in defense of this country. This is the greatest country on this planet. I am fortunate to be an American; with that comes great responsibility. I believe service to country is the greatest way to show others that nothing can be taken for granted. Our freedom comes not from just an ideal. Our freedom comes from action. Our forefathers showed all of us through action how to attain freedom and most importantly, how to keep our freedom.

The many men and women throughout our country's history that have given their lives in defense of our liberty and freedom have shown all of us that action and that ideal is still alive in this country. I am forever grateful for those men and women in uniform that came before me and after me, in service to this country to keep this country free and alive forever.

VIETNAM KIA MEMORIAL



There are 58,267 names on the Vietnam Wall Memorial in Washington, D.C. and between 142-152 of them are from Kern County.

Retired Staff Sgt. Hill Reyes, who served two tours in Vietnam, thought it fitting to

develop a display of local heroes so they would not be forgotten. He has 146 names listed on a website (marmatt.com/Vietnam-mem/kia.html) and 55 photos which he exhibits at various veteran functions through Kern County.

CVAF was honored to feature it at this year's Kern County Veterans Stand Down. Hill asks if your family members or friends are not listed on his website, please send the information to him, so they too, can be honored and remembered.

HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



Manuel V.

My name is Manuel V. I am a U.S. ARMY (82nd Airborne Division) veteran and I entered The California Veterans Assistance Foundation (CVAF) on July 24, 2012.

Before coming to CVAF, I was fighting homelessness and an addiction with methamphetamines. I had severe emotional problems and was on the verge of losing everything I had been working for. Also before I came to CVAF, I was an angry person and I couldn't make sense of my life. Since I've come to CVAF, all that has changed. I am no longer an angry person. I don't have urges to use drugs. I have truly learned my lesson from this final relapse. I have learned to take charge of my life, which includes noticing that I was being selfish in the past.

I have three children (Serrena, Sierra

and Allen) that need me. I have learned while being at CVAF that I affect people, children included. When I succeed, my children benefit from my success and when I fail because of bad choices, my kids suffer from my failures.

Things are really moving forward in my life now. I am a resident manager here at CVAF; I have a job at NRG Energy as an executive assistant. I am planning to finish up my bachelor's degree at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) in January through VA benefit chapter 31. I attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings and I go to church to take care of my spiritual health. I have a great support group, which includes all the staff here at CVAF. Each one of them has played a part in my success. There are things that I haven't accomplished yet, but I believe that as long as I continue to apply the things that I have learned here, my life will be a whole lot better.



Michael J.

My name is Michael and I am a veteran of 14 years of active duty service in the U.S Navy. After discharge from the military, I became incarcerated in the state of

Virginia. After my release, I returned to California to serve my probation and look for work. I moved back in with my family, but my return caused them a lot of burden, so I had to seek employment in another county, putting me in a homeless situation.

I mentioned during a NA meeting that I was seeking work and looking for a drug/alcohol free place to live. A fellow veteran told me of the California Veterans Assistance Foundation and that their program would help me with both housing and employment.

I am now working for Caterpillar and housed in a clean drug/alcohol free home at the Decatur location. The program is helping me with personal needs in a positive environment that will help me in my transition to standard living.

Thank You,
Michael J.

RIDGECREST STAND DOWN



Pictured, L-R: Peter, Dennis and Chad.

More than 100 veterans turned out for the first annual Stand Down in Ridgecrest. CVAF Program Director Dennis Madrid and two residents were on hand to provide information on services and resources.

A special thank you to Gwendolyn Thornton, from the Stand Down Committee, who allowed the leftover food to be distributed to CVAF. Over 100 cheeseburgers, donuts and water were handed to the residents much to their delight.

SUPPORTIVE, continued from page 1 —

In order to accomplish the goal of providing housing services to 70 Veterans and their families, CVAF has added one new Case Manager, Caroline Twocats-Romero and one new Housing Specialist, Vicki Sykes.

To refer a Veteran, contact Rosemary Hobbs at rosemary.hobbs@cavaf.org or 661-868-7313. For additional program information, please contact Heather Kimmel at heather.kimmel@cavaf.org or 661-695-3626.

NEW STAFF, continued from page 1 —

Welcome aboard, Rosemary! Since beginning her position in the Resource and Referral office, Rosemary has quickly exceeded our expectations. She handles every veteran's case with care and a genuine concern for their well being. Her professionalism and ability to work with providers in the community has created an ease of access for veterans in Kern County. Keep up the great work.



STAND DOWN REMARKS



I really enjoyed the Stand Down. I got the chance to meet and network with other vets. It was really cool to go to all the booths and talk to all the pretty girls.

I went to the Stand Down court and was able to take care of an old fine I had. I was able to negate a \$495.00 fine with three hours of community service.

I am looking forward to next year's Stand Down with all the good food and people.

Thank You,
Gerald G.
CVAF Resident

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.

JOBS, continued from page 2 —

obtain birth certificates, driver's licenses and work clothing.

An array of services utilizing a case management approach directly assists homeless veterans, as well as providing critical linkages for a variety of supportive services available in their local communities. The program is employment focused, and veterans receive the employment and training services they need in order to re-enter the labor force. Job placement, training, job development and career counseling are some of the services being provided.

According to Ron, "Job development has been in full swing for about three months now and just finished our first quarter for the grant. I am proud to say that everything

is going great. During our first quarter, we needed to place eight veterans into work and we managed to get seven employed. We now have a total of 33 veterans enrolled in the program and we are kicking off our second quarter strong with two placed into employment and two in training to be solar technicians. Our goal for this quarter is to have five more placed into work and 22 more enrolled into the HVRP program. I feel as the job developer that these goals should be no problem to meet."

Ron is doing an outstanding job with this position and we will feature veteran's successes in this program in future editions of the Alliance.