

CALIFORNIA VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION



THE ALLIANCE

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

Fall 2014

WE ARE KERN COUNTY'S ONLY VETERANS SPECIFIC HOMELESS PROGRAM

WANTED...SPONSORS FOR VETERAN FAMILIES THIS CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a tough time for our veterans. They are proud and at times embarrassed that they need any help at all. They found themselves in a situation of being homeless or being at risk of being homeless – and its Christmastime. A time when, in addition to needs having to be met, there are also wishes and dreams.

Aside from the personal hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, conditioner, shavers, shave cream, deodorant, feminine personal

need items, etc., there is also a need for household cleaning products. Everything you can imagine that you use to keep your house clean. And now Christmastime is fast approaching and there is the desire to ensure that their family's Christmas wishes are met.

We need individuals or families that are willing to sponsor a Veteran family in need. To buy the Christmas gifts listed on a wish list. They usually ask for very little, except for the children who don't

quite understand the situation in which the family finds itself. They want toys.

If you can step forward and assist these proud men and women that have served our country, please do so. They fought for you. They now need you to step forward and help them out.

Anyone interested in sponsoring one of our Veteran families need only contact the California Veterans Assistance Foundation at 695-3626 to get started.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



As we near the end of 2014, I look back to January and wonder where the time went. A lot of new and exciting changes and challenges were thrown

our way this past year and I wanted to take the opportunity to review them.

The Women Veterans Advisory Committee was busy and sponsored three amazing events. The Kern County Women Veterans Stand Up was held in February and was an opportunity for women veterans in our community to start linking up with services. Our "Boot Project" was a day of healing by decorating a combat boot and sharing our stories with other veterans. Lastly, the Veterans Day Parade was very special this year with CVAF sponsoring a woman veteran's entry.

Our Employment and Training program was busy with new staff, new training opportunities and new job opportunities for the veterans we are serving.

Two of our transitional housing programs

received facelifts through the generosity of the Home Depot Foundation, as well as a grant received through the VA. We take great pride in the properties we own and we were able to upgrade 15 apartments with paint and flooring, while 8 received brand new kitchens.

The Supportive Services for Veterans and Families project has really opened our eyes to the needs of veteran families in our community. For many years we focused on single, male veterans and now we are able to put families into homes, help keep them in their current home or assist with past due utility bills. We were recently awarded a \$3 million "surge funding" grant from the VA to focus on ending homelessness among veterans in our community. The other great part of this program is hiring new staff that will provide all these amazing services throughout the county of Kern.

Lastly, we could not do any of the great work we do without the support of our local community. When we needed diapers for a veteran's baby, we got hundreds... when we needed gently used furniture, it

came in trailers...when we needed food, we received boxes. The stories of how the community stepped up to help our families are almost too numerous to mention, however, there are a couple that have truly touched each and every one of our hearts. One organization teamed our veterans up with foster boys on Father's Day. This has led to a couple other events that can team our veterans up to mentor these young men that do not have a father figure in their lives. Another organization wanted to do a simple two-hour project for a local organization. They ended up spending an entire day painting and refurbishing a young veteran's apartment. He was embarrassed to show people his home and now it is truly one his family is proud of.

I am convinced that 2015 will push all of us beyond our limits. It is the deadline set to end chronic homelessness among veterans, so it is time to roll up our sleeves and get the work done! That gives us 393 days!

From the staff and veterans of the California Veterans Assistance Foundation, please have a safe and happy holiday season!

KERN COUNTY VETERANS STAND DOWN

On October 9th, the California Veterans Assistance Foundation hosted the annual Kern County Veterans Stand Down. The process and planning to make this event happen was extensive. The Stand Down committee, a group consisting of volunteers

from agencies within the community and CVAF staff, worked together to make this event the best thus far.

Over 508 veterans attended with 100 of them identified as homeless, unstably housed or in imminent risk of losing their

housing. Six organizations that were in attendance were able to address housing issues alone. The most popular service provided was veteran's court. Over 60 veterans registered and had their court cases (misdemeanor and traffic) heard

before a fully staffed and functional court with Judge Vega preceding. Judge Vega, a Vietnam Veteran himself, impressed all of the veterans. He made sure he engaged each veteran, finding out their branch of service and where they served before hearing their case. It was amazing to see all the providers that came out to inform veterans of all the programs and support services that

they can utilize right in our community.

Ashley Hulcy, a CVAF case manager, was impressed with the whole event. She stated, "As a Veteran who transitioned out of the military and a native to this community, this year's Stand Down was my first. I had no idea there were events that took place like this for Veterans!"

I had the pleasure of assisting in the clothing tent, wherein we were able to

give some of our homeless veterans new shoes that were donated for this event. The memory of a man taking off his old shoes and retiring them to replace them with a brand new pair and walking away with a smile is a memory I will not soon forget.

In addition to shoes, at least 80 jackets were given away ensuring warmth during the coming winter cold. I look forward to next year's Kern County Stand Down!"

WOMEN VETERANS SPOTLIGHTED ON HALLMARK CHANNEL'S HOME AND GARDEN SHOW

The Veterans Day episode of the Hallmark Channel's *Home and Garden*



Show featured stories from California women veterans on the unique problems they face when they transition from military to civilian life.

Special guest Pauley Perrette (Abby from *NCIS*) and MJ Derricott, founder of *Makeovers That Matter* spent time with the women while they talked about their personal experiences. To cap off the day, Matt Rogers performed a stirring rendition of "God Bless the USA."

CVAF's President/CEO Deborah

Johnson was one of 30 women invited to spend the day on the set and had the opportunity to talk with the other women about shared experiences and the challenges they all face, regardless of branch of service or the dates they served.

Female veterans, wives and widows of our male veterans are encouraged to reach out to MJ Derricott at MakeoversThatMatter.org and receive the help they need and participate in the Mindset Program.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



The task of managing a non-profit organization focused on serving veterans and their families who are homeless, at risk and low income can feel like the battle of David and Goliath. CVAF being David, and the epidemic of homelessness amongst veterans, the giant. The programs and services offered in combination with community support become our stones that will each play an important role in ending veteran homelessness.

Kern County has made great strides towards ending chronic homelessness among veterans, which much like the

analogy with David, sounds like an impossible task. However, today I am proud to say that this goal is not only attainable, but will become a reality in the near future. This is becoming a possibility through many countywide initiatives which include: The Zero 2016 project, The Mayor's Challenge and the VA's Community Plan. Each one of these initiatives has one focus in common...to end chronic homelessness among veterans in Kern County and to reach a Functional Zero by 2016. Functional Zero is reached when Kern County can show that for every homeless veteran counted on the streets during the annual point in time count, we have housing available to them.

CVAF has shown full support in each one of these initiatives and is a critical part of each of the plans that the country, the VA and the county are implementing to move us towards our goal. For more information on these initiatives, please visit the following links.

Zero 2016: emtyolutions.org/zero2016

Mayor's Challenge: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/veteran_information/mayors_challenge/

VA Community Plan: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:6QWSn3slRDsJ:https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf/docs/SSVF_P1_Kick_off_Webinar_October16_2014_FINAL.pptx+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us



WELLS FARGO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS GRANT PROGRAM

CVAF received a \$1,000 grant from Wells Fargo through the generous sponsorship of Mayor Harvey Hall on November 6, 2014. On hand to receive the grant was President/CEO Deborah Johnson.

Wells Fargo supports organizations

working to strengthen communities through the efforts of their team member volunteers and contributors. They share their success with communities by giving back to non-profits and educational institutions that address vital community needs and issues.

HOME DEPOT MAKEOVER



Before



After

Home Depot awarded CVAF with a fifteen thousand dollar grant for much needed upgrades to our Decatur Street transitional housing facility. In November, the coordinating team member Amanda and all of the Home Depot volunteers descended on our facility to paint, replace flooring, kitchen cabinets and counter tops. Within ten days the work was completed and the results are fantastic.

California Veterans Assistance Foundation would like to thank Home Depot for the funding of this project. And also, our heartfelt thank you goes out to all of the Home Depot volunteers and workers for the wonderful work they have done for our Veterans.

RESIDENTS TAKE A TRIP TO THE WILD SIDE – AT KNOTT’S BERRY FARM!

November is a great month to be a veteran in California. From the free meals, oil changes and discounts on Veterans Day, we also get in free (with a friend or family member) at Knott’s Berry Farm. On November 20th, CVAF staff loaded up 24

veterans and took them for a day of sun and fun and thrills! We even had a 72 year old veteran ride the Xcelerator twice...in a row! *The best part of the day was that the staff and residents could spend time together, as veterans and friends!*



EMPLOYMENT READINESS PROGRAM

The California Veteran’s Assistance Foundation (CVAF) has developed a new Employment Readiness Program this year. This program assists veterans by offering training to prepare them for job seeking in five different areas: Resumé Workshop, Dress for Success, Job Searching Skills, Interview Preparation and Creating a Portfolio.

In the Resumé Writing Class veterans learn about differences in the types of resúms, targeted vs. chronological for example. They also learn how to create Power Statements by highlighting strengths and combining these with statements to show how results were achieved. How to write a cover letter is also taught.

The Dress for Success Class teaches some basic principles of hygiene, as well as

general tips on dress. Then the class goes into some detail about appropriate attire for interviews for various types of jobs – from construction and trade jobs to automotive repair to finance and technology.

The Job Searching Class starts off with ways to review a veteran’s backgrounds and talents, explore career choices and then how to set career goals. The participants learn how to develop a “Me in 30 Seconds” statement to help create a well-balanced understanding of who they are – which is utilized to present to employers at the job interview. We also discuss resources and how to identify, develop and interact with them.

The Interview Preparation Class teaches how to interview resources for information,

as well as how to be successful in a job interview. We discuss topics such as presentation, opening the interview, using “Me in 30 Seconds” or Power Statements, turning weaknesses into strengths, how to effectively close an interview and following up after.

In the Portfolio Class we discuss reasons to have a portfolio, what to include in the portfolio, how to organize the portfolio and how to use the portfolio and present it during the interview process.

These five classes are held weekly on a rotating basis. Once job-seeking veterans finish all five they are awarded a certificate of completion signed by the CVAF President/CEO Deborah Johnson and CVAF Executive Director Heather Kimmel.

WOMEN VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BUSY ON VETERANS DAY!

The CVAF Women Veterans Advisory Committee coordinated an entry for the



Veterans Day Parade that was comprised of pictures of local women in uniform, and then had them walking beside or riding on the 2-1/2-ton decorated truck.

There were 14 women, from current conflict to Vietnam Era

who participated in the parade. This was the first time an entry centered around women veterans, and the crowd erupted in cheers as they walked by. For many of the women, it was the first time they had ever been in a Veterans Day parade and to see the support and recognition for them was priceless.

HVRP PROGRESS REPORT

The HVRP program has been running very smoothly over the past couple months. We have had several Veterans get hired working in the grape fields for Ludy Farms. Mr. Don Ludy reaches out to our Veterans at our Decatur and Buena Vista homes to offer them seasonal jobs during the picking season.

We have also had a new Transitional

Housing/HVRP client find employment after only being in the GPD program for 2 weeks. He is really excited and enjoys his new job.

The HVRP Program has had some new changes with staff members, as well. Former SSVF/HVRP Case Manager Chris Allen has been promoted to Program Director overseeing the SSVF Priority 2

grant and the HVRP grant and we have a new SSVF/HVRP Case Manager, Rachael Felix. Welcome aboard to our great team and we are very excited to see what the next few months bring us.

We are very pleased to announce that our HVRP team has met all their goals for the past quarter and has met all their deadlines. AWESOME JOB, GUYS!!

IT TOOK A COMMUNITY...

by Brian Fox, SSVF Program Director

I want to share a story about empathy and how a small group of people can change lives through something that seems so simple, but to someone in need it can change their lives.

Throughout my career I have always heard people say that they do not donate to non-profits because they don't have enough to offer. My response to this statement has always been that even a small gesture can impact someone's life. At times even a kind word can save someone's life. Here is a story about how a group of people made a difference.

Like so many of the veterans we work with in the SSVF Program, Simeon spent the past two years on and off living on the streets. He was a returning veteran that served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Soon after being discharged honorably from the Army, he quickly fell into homelessness. Simeon was struggling with his PTSD, being under employed and trying to provide for his wife and two small children. Simeon was able to move his family into a small two-bedroom apartment, but was unable to furnish it and still put food on the table. And he was facing eviction.

When I first met and went to Simeon's apartment there was no furniture. Simeon and his family had been sleeping on the floor. During the first month of working with Simeon, his wife had left him and took his two small children, because he was not able to provide for them. Due to the limited resources of the SSVF Program, we were only able to assist Simeon with his rent, beds and a refrigerator.

I would go home each night thinking about Simeon and frustrated that we were not able to help him more. The idea that here was a veteran who saw combat, selflessly protected the freedoms that we daily take for granted was once again

fighting to stay alive. It bothered me to say the least. Two weeks ago CVAF had received a phone call from a church group who had been trying to find a way for their members to do a volunteer project. They had been trying for over a month to find somewhere to volunteer, but every call they made they were told no.

When I first spoke with their coordinator she was surprised to hear that we had a project to do. They wanted to do a painting project for 1-1/2 to 2 hours max. I told her about Simeon and a few of her members met me at Simeon's apartment. Originally I was just hoping that we could at least have Simeon's apartment painted. Even just having it painted would have made a world of difference. Once they met Simeon and understood the challenges he was facing, they stepped into action.

They spent that weekend calling friends and family asking for donations, a chair here and a bookshelf there.

When we met on Tuesday morning they brought 25 volunteers with them and enough furnishings to outfit Simeon's apartment. They spent time speaking with Simeon, asking him what he liked and learned about his family; they took him to lunch and listened to him explain his story. The day was completely about Simeon and his family. We all cleaned and painted Simeon's apartment. We hung pictures, curtains and then moved in the furniture. By the time they left "eight hours later" it looked like a whole new apartment.

I can honestly admit I was overwhelmed by their act of kindness. I can't imagine how Simeon must have felt. Simeon now has a place he can call home and is working on reuniting with his family. His children have the bedroom they deserve, including toys and books.

STEP UP/TIP/RALLY POINT PROGRAMS

The Step Up program has assisted veterans with the opportunity to move toward their independence while living within a housing program. CVAF has been proud to witness two successful resident discharges.

These residents moved from transitional housing to their own apartments. Learning good techniques from the living skill classes, these residents have acquired their own furnishings, paid their first month's rent and deposit. They also were discharged with an adequate amount in savings.

With the design of Rally Point, our residents are able to gain full control of their independence by establishing

permanent affordable housing and utilities in their own names. Something that once was a challenge becomes a positive reflection. This gives our residents a true "I can" attitude.

Currently our Transition In Place (TIP) residents are in the process of taking on greater responsibility of transferring rental leases in their names; a giant step for residents in this program because they are beginning to put their independence tools into action.

It is awesome to see residents flourish in these extended housing programs. Way to go!

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

To serve veterans and other individuals and their families who are homeless, at risk, and low income. To restore and improve lives by alleviating homelessness through information, advocacy, and service.

