

WHAT IS VFAB?

Veterans and Family Advisory Board (VFAB) is a mental health consumer council made up of Veterans and family members that advocate for Veterans issues. Staff members sit in on the council as liaisons (but do not vote on items). Our mission is to lead in building a working alliance between Veterans and VA leadership to ensure the highest quality of service and care to Veterans.

VFAB needs members who want to proactively participate in the mission and the monthly meetings. Together we can enhance communication and representation of all Veterans. We strive towards a well-informed Veteran population and try to be champions in addressing stigma. Come join us and be leaders in building the working relationship between the Veterans and staff at the Providence VAMC.

If you would like to join VFAB or attend a meeting, please contact Jessica Zuehlke, PsyD, at 401-273-7100, ext. 2629 or email Ron Whitcomb, president of VFAB, at : tawodi11@aol.com.



Spring Has Sprung!

VETERANS WATCH

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Providence VA Medical Center

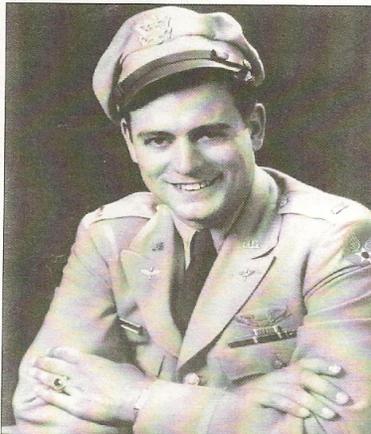
SPRING 2012



A Newsletter Written FOR Veterans BY Veterans

R.I. AVIATION HALL OF FAME INDUCTS TWO MEMBERS

By Bob Goudreau



Roland E. Stumpff

On February 4th, 2012, I had the distinct honor and privilege to be present at the Varnum Armory in East Greenwich for the R.I. Aviation Hall of Fame's Ninth Annual Induction Ceremony. Among the honorees were Mr. Roland E. Stumpff and Dr. Merton Gold who are active members of the Providence VA community.

Mr. Stumpff was a B-24 pilot who participated in the bombing

raids on the Ploesti oil fields in Romania. On his 13th mission, his aircraft was shot down and he and his crew were held as prisoners of war (POWs) in Bulgaria until the end of the war. He went back to Bulgaria within a month of his release to help the US Government track down and identify prison camp guards who mistreated Allied POWs.

After leaving active duty, Mr. Stumpff went to Cornell University, graduating in 1949 with a degree in mechanical engineering.

Dr. Merton Gold was a B-17 navigator flying out of England and shot down on just his 4th mission. Not only was Dr. Gold a bomber crewman, but he was a Jewish bomber crewman. Following the Battle of the Bulge, he and other Jewish flyers, as well as a few Tuskegee airmen, were put into what he calls a "Ghetto" barracks. It was here that Merton experienced his greatest anxiety and fear.

After the war and thanks to



Dr. Merton Gold

the G.I. Bill, Dr. Gold was able to graduate from the University of Rochester Medical School. He was a practicing obstetrician for over forty years. During that time he delivered an estimated 3,000 babies.

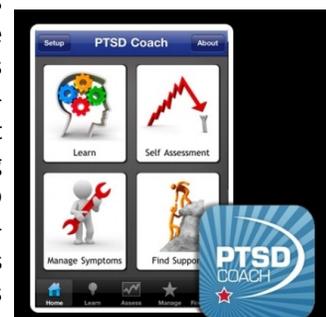
Mr. Stumpff is an active member of the WWII Ex-POW group and a volunteer servicing the Providence VA campus. Dr. Gold is a VA-trained facilitator and leads a group of Korean War Veterans in a long-term wellness project.

SMARTPHONE APP FOR PTSD

By Ron Whitcomb

The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Coach smartphone application was jointly developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD). The two agencies have developed the PTSD Coach application to help Veterans dealing

with symptoms of PTSD. The free app gives accurate information about PTSD, coping strategies to use in the moment, and links to local sources of



support. The app was recently honored as one of seven recipients of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman's Awards for Advancements in Accessibility.

I LIKE THE VETERAN

By D. Correia

If he's your friend,
Broke down or not,
He's loyal 'til the end;

I like the Veteran.
Walking, rolling, or on a crutch,
He'll tell ya!
If you're being too much!

I like the Veteran.
He'll tell you about his war,
And at times,
Your heart will be sore.

I like the Veteran.
At times he'll pull hard on his smoke.
That's when you know,
His war was no joke.
I like the veteran...

FACTOID

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of the 2010 count, there are approximately 308,745,538 people living in the United States of America.

According to their tabulations of those 308.7 million folks, 21,798,077 were Veterans

Woman **Veterans** totaled 1,567,293.



Happy Spring!

SYMPTOMS OF INNER PEACE

By Ron Whitcomb

1. A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fears based on past experiences.
2. An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
3. A loss of interest in judging others and self.
4. A lack of participation in outer and inner conflict.
5. A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
6. A loss of ability to worry (this is a very serious symptom).
7. Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
8. Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.



9. Frequent attacks of smiling and/or laughing.
10. Increasing susceptibility to love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.
11. An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than to make them happen.

MILITARY TRIVIA

*The first major military use of GPS was for finding Capt. Scott O'Grady in Bosnia (1995).

*In 1976, the Coast Guard Academy became the first service academy to admit women.

*The Bouncing Betty land mine was a shrapnel mine that pops up a few feet and explodes at groin level.

*African Americans made up

less than 1% of the North's population, yet, by the Civil war's end, 180,000 black men made up 10% of the Union Army.

*The Standard issue canteen has a capacity of one US quart.

*Some 2.6 million Americans served in Vietnam. More than 58,000 were killed in action.

*74% of Vietnam Veterans

said they would serve again, even knowing the outcome.

Military Boot Camps vary in length. It is 9 weeks for the Army, 6 ½ weeks for the Air Force and 12 weeks for the Marines.

*The Korean armistice was signed in 1953, but the war never officially ended....Divided along the 38th parallel, North and South Korea are technically still at war.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE AT VA

By Bob Goudreau

Whether it is PTSD or post deployment readjustment issues, the VA healthcare system is prepared to offer assistance. When Viet Nam Veterans came home, there were no programs in place to help the vets readjust after their war time experiences. We formulated our own, "Readjustment Strategies," some good and some not so much.

Over the years, treatment methodologies were developed that have proven effective for dealing with the

symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress. If you talk with others, you will find that your symptoms are not unique to you alone but are universal to almost every combat Veteran. Whether it is anger, sleep issues, substance abuse or just not feeling like your old self, there are programs put forth by the VA Healthcare system to help reduce or eliminate some of the most troubling symptoms. For uncontrolled anger, the VA offers Anger Management Classes. For sleep issues, the VA offers sleep lab therapies. For sub-

stance abuse, the VA offers a variety of programs as well.

Wives and significant others are very much a part of providing care to our Veterans. As such, family therapy sessions are available for individuals, couples, or in a group setting. The worst thing you can do is ignore the situation because your symptoms will get worse if not treated.

As Veterans, you have earned these benefits, but it is up to you to initiate contact. For more information, please speak to your primary care provider.

PC TELEPHONE CLINICS

By Bob Goudreau

The VA started doing Telephone Clinics a long time ago, but it's only recently that the Telephone Clinics are a part of the Primary Care Provider's (PCP) daily calendar. Doing so not only helps the provider; more importantly, it improves access while at the same time helping Veterans save time and travel expenses. Veterans now may receive some of their healthcare in the comfort of their own homes.

When does a PCP use tele-

phone clinics? Normally, he or she uses them for test readouts, general healthcare discussions, or for routine follow-up. The idea has been around for a long time. Rather than ask the patient to commute to the medical center for a 5 or 10-minute meeting with a doctor for a routine consultation, the provider calls the patient. If a face-to-face follow-up is needed, then the provider will advise the patient accordingly.

There is one 'glitch,' however, that the VA is hoping to

resolve as quickly as possible. Some Veterans have received appointment letters listing these type clinics without specifying "telephone clinic." Some Veterans, through no fault of their own, are coming to the Medical Center for the appointment, only to find out that it was a telephone clinic and not a face-to-face appointment.

If you receive an appointment letter in the mail that your PCP never told you about, please call the TAP line at (401) 457-3336.

BENEFITS OF PEER SUPPORT: OPERATION VET-2-VET

By Rick Braley

I was sitting at my computer the other night doing a little research for an article to write, when I came across a piece from the *Freelance Star* about a new program that connected Vets with peers. I assumed the article was not about animal doctors. Being both a Veteran and a certified peer, the article naturally piqued my interest.

The article went on to explain how the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill that created the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, which is tasked with helping Veterans outside of the VA system. Veterans in the program help other Veterans in dealing with issues of PTSD, drug or alcohol addiction, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), marriage and child counseling, and referral information. As I read further, the article explained how this peer-support group was one component of a new program which was established with the intent

of providing those with PTSD a place to talk, relate experiences, develop new friends, and share in comradeship with others.

Did you know that there is a similar program here in the Providence VA that has been around for four years, has



experienced VA certified peers (3), and serves Veterans from any era? This program is called "Operation Vet 2 Vet," and its three peer leaders are combat Veterans with PTSD.

Operation Vet 2 Vet is unlike any other peer group around! Don Sullivan and Ron Whitcomb started Op-

eration Vet 2 Vet four years ago as a way to confront their own PTSD and also as a way to help other Veterans. Their goal was, and is, to help other Veterans live with PTSD by providing a safe group environment for the meetings. During these support groups, participants are not allowed to tell war stories, argue politics or religion, or focus on "how bad life is." They concentrate on laughter, comradeship, and the feeling of being with others who have been there. They exchange the "feeling of feeling good" and the sense that it's okay to laugh and have fun.

PTSD doesn't have to control you. You don't have to be mad all the time; you deserve to be happy. Their goal is to have everyone in the group leave feeling better than when they came in.

For more information, including meeting dates, times and locations please call Don @ 401-345-5457; Ron @ 860-564-1561, or Rick @ 660-908-2623.

FIVE STAR QUOTES

*General George C. Marshall-"When a thing is done, it's done. Don't look back. Look forward to your next objective."

*General Douglas MacArthur-"In war there is no substitute for victory."

*General Dwight D. Eisenhower-"Bravery is the capacity to perform properly even when scared half to death."

*Admiral William Frederick "Bull" Halsey-"There are no extraordinary men.....just extraordinary circumstances that ordinary men are forced to deal with."

*Admiral Ernest J. King-"God grant me the courage not to give up what I think is right; even though I think it is hopeless."

*General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold (US Air Force)-"Offense is the essence of air power."



VETERANS WATCH IS ONLINE!

The Veterans Watch is now available on-line. Find the latest editions at www.providence.va.gov/Newsletters.asp.

Issues come out quarterly in January, April, July, and October. Watch for our next issue due out the middle of April 2011. Thanks to all our readers and the positive response you have shown to the *Veterans Watch*.

PHOTOS ON DISPLAY IN 3B

Photographs taken by Veterans in the "Frame Your Recovery" class within the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) will be on display in the 3B waiting room, starting this spring.

Photographs will reflect different recovery-based themes, with a new theme and new photographs debuting every six weeks. The first theme will be "The Journey."

Come check out this beautiful artwork!



MEET THE STAFF!

Veterans Helping Veterans

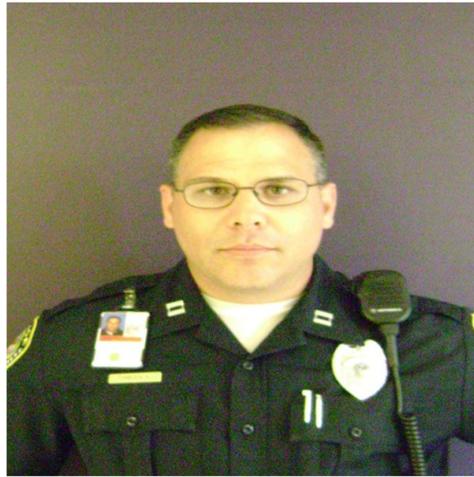
Spotlight on: JOHN THIBODEAU

By Bob Goudreau

Captain John Thibodeau is on the Providence VA Medical Center's police force, coming to us in 2005 after serving 20 years as a US Marine.

Captain Thibodeau began his military career at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) in San Diego, CA. It is the only other recruit training facility outside of Parris Island. After 13 weeks of basic training, he went to Military Police training, specializing in SWAT and K9 Dog handling. Early in his enlistment, he was assigned to Embassy duty: first in Geneva, Switzerland and later in La Paz, Bolivia. Returning to San Diego

MCRD, he was a Drill Instructor (DI) for 3 years. While in service, Captain Thibodeau



Captain John Thibodeau

was deployed four times to the Middle East to include Iraq, Kuwait, and a tour in Afghanistan. Captain Thibodeau rounded out his Marine career as the Per-

sonal Security Officer for Lt. Gen. Richard S. Kramlich, Commanding General for the 1st Force Service & Support Group at Camp Pendleton, CA.

During his 20 years as a Marine, Captain Thibodeau earned many awards and accolades to include the Meritorious Service Medal, a Navy Commendation Medal, three Navy Achievement Medals, a Combat Action Ribbon, and a National Defense Service Medal. He retired with the rank of Gunnery Sergeant.

Captain Thibodeau is currently the Acting Chief of the Providence VA Police Service. We thank him for his service and support of Veterans.

STRENGTH AT HOME OFFERS HOPE

By Bob Goudreau

Strength at Home is a VA program for Veterans of any era struggling with anger issues and who have used aggression against their intimate partner within the past year. This is a 12-session intervention program to stop intimate partner aggression. The group focus is on understanding problems with anger. Participants learn to deescalate situations that lead to arguments and conflict. Concentration is on learning how to manage anger and stress more effectively by communicating in more constructive

ways. The groups, which are confidential, meet Monday and Tuesday evenings. A \$300 compensation package is supplied to cover the costs of gas and child care.

Strength at Home also offers a 10-session couples program where the male partner is an OEF/OIF/OND Veteran. The goal is to help couples transition from deployment to civilian life. This group focuses on how to increase feelings of closeness, happiness and ways to prevent arguments which lead to conflict in relationships. Again, these groups are confidential and meet

Monday and Wednesday evenings. A \$300 per person (\$600 per couple) compensation package is offered to cover the costs of gas and childcare.

Remember, it takes a strong warrior to recognize the need for assistance. For more information, call Dr. Creech at (401) 273-7100, ext. 6245 or e-mail her at Suzannah.Creech@va.gov.

