JIM BURROWS RETIRES

By Martin Cappelli

After thirty years of service to VA Medical Centers and service men and women across the country, James W. Burrows, Executive Assistant to the Director of the VA Medical Center in Providence, RI, has retired.

I have had the privilege of knowing Mr. Burrows for many years. A friend to all, Jim’s door has always been open to Veterans and their families. All know him as an extremely compassionate and caring individual, consistently willing to listen and help those in need, or those who just wanted to stop by to say hello. Jim was accessible at all times, making himself available even during his breaks to discuss issues of importance to his fellow Veterans.

Jim, a 3-year Veteran of the US Army, 101st Airborne Division, is the proud father of four children, two of which are Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans. His dedication and commitment to Veterans everywhere permeated within his own family and in his vocation as a successful and giving public servant throughout his life.

It will be quite difficult to replace Jim Burrows. He has left an indelible mark on all Veterans who have known him. We will miss his smile and raspy voice, along with his familiar manner of support to all.

On behalf of all Veterans and personnel at the VA Medical Center, we thank Jim for his military service and his commitment and dedication to service. We wish him and his family the best in retirement and hope his future is filled with contentment and good health.

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator John Boozman (R-AR), member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and original co-sponsor of a resolution to honor Veterans who served in Vietnam by designating March 30th as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day,” issued the following statement:

“This day is a well-deserved, overdue recognition for our soldiers who selflessly served in Vietnam. These men and women risked their lives defending the interests of our nation. While they earned the honor of a hero’s welcome, unfortunately they didn’t receive it. This day affords us the opportunity to show our support and gratitude for the service and sacrifice these Veterans made to preserve our freedom. I encourage all Americans to honor our Vietnam Veterans for their dedication to securing and protecting democracy.”

The U.S. Armed Forces began serving in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese in 1961, and in 1965, ground combat troops were sent into Vietnam. After many years of combat, all U.S. troops were withdrawn from Vietnam on March 30, 1973, under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. More than 58,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces lost their lives and more than 300,000 were wounded in Vietnam.

Discussion is underway to plan a picnic later this year to mark this important occasion. The Veterans of Rhode Island planning this event would like to hear your thoughts at www.WHVV.Blogspot.com (by clicking on “add a comment”). Please note that this blog is not affiliated with the Providence VAMC or the Department of Veterans Affairs.
HELPING VETS IS RI4GI’S MISSION

By Tom McCarthy

One does not have to look far in Rhode Island or in the Providence VAMC in order to find a Veteran who cares about other Veterans. One of these people is a Vietnam combat Veteran who served with a RECON unit with the 25th Inf. Div. named Frank is the founder of a group called RI4GI’s, which last year and in early 2011 raised a substantial amount of money for the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) to help the severely wounded Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. RI4GI’s had many fundraising events from a Game Dinner to a Concert featuring the Kingston Trio with all proceeds going to the WWP. Run which takes place June 26, 2011. This bike run is for R.I. Veterans in need and all proceeds will go to Operation Stand-down of RI (http://www.osdri.com), which is a program that helps RI homeless and disabled Veterans with a hand up not a hand out. This year’s RI4GI’s bike run is in memory of Frank “the Trike” Foster, another Veteran who was known by many at this Providence VAMC, the R.I. motorcycle scene and especially at Operation Stand-down for the past 14 years. Frank “the Trike” found himself homeless and in need, and Operation Stand-down gave him a hand up, and Frank never forgot it. “The Trike” was a Veteran who cared about other Veterans, and his legacy will be remembered by many. This motorcycle run will be one of the many events RI4GI’s will put together for 2011 to help our Veterans. For more information on RI4GI’s contacts and informative Veteran links, feel free to visit: ri4gis.blogspot.com or drop Frank Marabello an email at ri4gis@yahoo.com.

CHEAP COLLEGE COURSES

By Kathleen Meunier

Veterans who have a 10% service connection or more (with valid award letter) can get their tuition paid for at any state college or university in Rhode Island. The only thing a Veteran is responsible for is paying the fees associated with the tuition. For example, a course at R.I. College would cost about $1100, but with the tuition waiver it would cost $150. Please contact Kathy Meunier (ext. 2695) if you have interest or want more info.

VIETNAM VETS MEM. FUND

By Ron Whitcomb

Enthusiasm is continuing to build around the country for the Education Center at The Wall (Vietnam War Memorial, Washington DC). Throughout 2010, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) made strides in fundraising, leadership, public awareness and design to continue forward momentum for the project. An important component of the Education Center activities is collecting photos of the more than 58,000 individuals whose names are on The Wall. To that end, a National Call for Photos was launched in 2009, and a steady stream of photos has been arriving at VVMF headquarters ever since. Momentum is also building with the physical work for the Education Center and in September 2010, VVMF hired Tishman Construction Corporation to serve as construction manager for the project. VVMF wanted to find a firm that understands the delicate challenges of working on a building in a historically significant area and Tishman has experience in this arena. To learn more, visit www.buildthecenter.org. VVMF holds six yearly ceremonies at The Wall to honor and remember those who served in Vietnam. Here is the ceremony schedule for 2011:
4/18: In Memory Day
5/8: Mother’s Day at The Wall
5/30: Memorial Day Observance at The Wall
6/19: Father’s Day Rose Remembrance
11/11: Veterans Day Observance at The Wall
12/19: Christmas Ceremony

VET TECH

By Kathleen Meunier

Are you interested in learning computer skills or buying a computer for $100? If so, visit Vet Tech in Providence! Vet Tech offers basic and more advanced computer classes to Veterans. After Veterans complete all classes Vet Tech has to offer, they can train to learn how to fix computers. The skills learned from all classes may help Veterans pursue new career goals.

Vet Tech also sells refurbished computers. Amazingly, you can purchase a rebuilt desktop computer for $100 or a laptop for $125. The will provide you with financing if you need it. Vet Tech is located in Providence (Olneyville) at 679 Broadway. The contact person is Eleojo Tech is located in Providence (Olneyville) at 679 Broadway. The contact person is Eleojo Ali, who can be reached at (401) 437-421-1079.

VOLUNTEER

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services, there is a greater need for volunteers.

If you want to give your time and talent to support the care of America’s Veterans,” or if you want to help, but don’t have time, there are many ways you can assist. Visit the VAVS office on the 5th floor and become a volunteer. Donna Ruthwicz, Debra Veasey or Henry Rea would be glad to answer any questions or give information about what you can do to become a VAVS volunteer.

VAVS volunteers are a priceless asset to the Nation’s Veterans and to the Department of Veterans Affairs. For more information go to www.volunteer.va.gov.
MEET THE STAFF!

By Bob Goudreau

It was the summer of 1965, and Barbara M. Maine needed to make a choice. A recent high school grad, she didn’t really feel ready for college but her other option of working in the factories had even less appeal. She decided to visit a local Army recruiter to investigate what the military had to offer.

Barbara enlisted in the U.S. Army on June 21, 1965. She saw it as the “Best of both worlds.” She now had a job and a source for further training. After basic training, she was assigned to Fort Knox, KY, as an admin clerk. In March of 1967, Barbara’s older brother was drafted into the Army. She formulated a plan that would change both of their lives.

Knowing that her brother, as a draftee, had a better chance of being placed in harm’s way, she promptly volunteered for an assignment in Viet Nam. She reported for duty at US Army Vietnam (USARV) headquarters in Saigon in April of 1968. By the time her tour of duty was over in May of 1969, Barbara’s brother (who went to Germany) had too little time left in service to be sent to Viet Nam. Score one for Barb!

She was up for reenlistment, having achieved the rank of E-5 and decorated for her service, she saw her future as a career soldier. Upon re-enlistment she was assigned to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). At such a high level command, Barbara soon realized her chances for promotion were limited so she volunteered for a second tour in Viet Nam. From December 1970 until November 1971 she was stationed at USARV headquarters at Long Binh Post, Viet Nam.

Over the next several years, Barbara rose in rank holding various positions to include platoon sergeant, an ROTC instructor, and a drill instructor for the first company of recruits taking basic training on a co-ed basis at Ft. McCullen, Alabama. During her Army career, she achieved the rank of Master

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**WHY WORK: PART 2**

*By Kathleen Meunier*

It’s been a little over a year since I wrote my initial article, “Why Work.” As an update I’d like to share the evolution of a person who is working and in Recovery. When I began this job as a Peer Support Technician (PST) in January 2010, I knew that I would have symptom breakthroughs as a part of having a serious mental illness (SMI), but I learned it is important to “stay the course.”

I had to see that difficulties could be chalked up to a “bad day” versus a bad week, month or even year. That’s the way it is when you have an SMI. I learned that good nutrition and a good night’s rest are remedies in and of themselves. I began to find out that a lot of what I was experiencing in terms of stress was actually growth, and I shared a commonality with my co-workers.

In the year that I have worked, I have had two breakthroughs in my thinking that were readily correctible by getting help from my co-workers and challenging the psychosis. I took one week out for maintenance of good health. Prior to work, I was in a vicious cycle of reacting to symptoms. Adding something positive into my life (i.e., work) has created a ripple effect where I am happier even more so than if I had been prescribed a pill. Enough cannot be said about balance. I do a lot, but always manage to achieve the yin and yang of life.

Besides the money I make from work, I have established and maintained new relationships, which is very satisfying. I wake up every day knowing that I am going to make a contribution out of what once was a wasteland due to my mental illness. I feel valued, and my self esteem is at its peak. I think new pathways in my brain are being formed.

Again I say, “I work because I am well and I am well because I work.” Namaste.

*FREE BEACH PASS*

Veterans who have a 100% service-connected disability are eligible for a free beach pass, good at any RI state beach and for golfing at Goddard Park. Passes are transferable to any vehicle. Contact Kathy at (401) 273-7100, ext. 2695 for more information.

**MY RECOVERY**

*By James Sousa*

I cannot emphasize enough the negative effect illicit drugs has had on both the diagnosis and treatment of my mental illness. The first time I was diagnosed with mental illness, it was not the correct diagnosis. I was treated for Paranoid Schizophrenia for years, while using illicit drugs. The drug I used made it hard for my doctors to know which symptoms were from mental illness and which symptoms were from drug use. After reaching sobriety, I was correctly diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder instead. This change in diagnosis and treatment and also being free from substances has given me a much better life, and I am grateful for this change and the opportunity to progress as a human being rather than just as a label.

As technology advances, we learn more about how illicit drugs negatively impact the chemical composition of the brain. We also learn that these drugs don’t produce life experiences on the same level as life on life’s terms can produce. This is yet another reason to end the cycle of substance abuse and at least try to have a better quality of life. We can live normal lives if we can grasp the ramifications of all this and work to make ourselves more useful and grateful for society.

The world has opportunities for all who wish to participate. But the use of illicit substances will not result in a quality of life that will further our human development. Thus, given my background of struggle, I urge all to abstain from using illicit drugs since they will only work against you. I hope that everyone struggling with mental illness can find the strength to remove the waste from their lives and find real quality and success.

**BARBARA**

*Continued from page 3*

Sergeant (E-8) while earning numerous awards and citations to include a Meritorious Service Medal, two Army Commendation Medals, a Bronze Star, Good Conduct Medals, Viet Nam Service and Campaign Medals. Barbara was a pioneer for women’s issues during the transition to the all volunteer Army. In 1985, she retired from the Army after 20 years of active duty.

Barbara is a Medical Program Clerk working in the Mental Health Outpatient Clinic on 3B. She began her employment at the Providence VA in 1987. We thank her for her service and her ongoing support of Veterans throughout the VA.