

Veterans Watch

A Newsletter Written by Veterans for Veterans

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What is VFAB?

Veterans and Family Advisory Board is a mental health consumer council composed of Veterans and family members who advocate for Veterans issues. VFAB needs members who want to proactively participate in our mission to keep Veterans better informed about Veterans' healthcare.

We are not VA employees. Rather, we are Veterans who work within the VA system to facilitate changes to better serve our Veteran population. Come join us and be leaders in building a working relationship between Veterans and staff at the PVAMC.

If you would like to join us, please e-mail Ron Whitcomb, president of VFAB at:

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Memorial Garden Dedication

by Bob Goudreau

Five years ago, Donna Russillo, Chief of Voluntary Service, stepped outside the ambulatory care unit of the Providence VA Medical Center. As she surveyed the campus, the oval plaza with a flagpole caught her attention. Although neatly trimmed, the plaza still contained some crab grass, weeds, and dandelions. At that moment, Donna began to devise a plan to honor all Veterans.

Working together with Russell Ainsworth, an employee of the facilities maintenance section who was working on a plan of his own, Donna and Russ approached Alan Summers, James Dixon and JJ Jimenez, who are also employees of FMS. Together, they developed a plan for our

garden that would provide a peaceful area to commemorate the sacrifices made by our Nation's heroes. Unfortunately,



Memorial Garden

gardens, such as these are quite expensive, so working through the VA Voluntary Service Committee, Voluntary Service began accepting donations to purchase

engraved bricks for the walkway that would wind through the garden. The plan called for five upright granite monuments depicting each of the five services; Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The stones were set in a circle to symbolize their equality and their unity and dedication to our Nation. In May, the first group of memorial bricks was installed. Individual bricks are engraved with various inscriptions such as the name of a Veteran and his/her branch of service and service dates. However, there are also bricks with personal messages of gratitude to our Veterans, thanking them for their service. Voluntary Service continues to offer these bricks for sale at \$125 each. The Memorial

Understanding Pharmacy Procedures

By Bob Goudreau

Here's a quick primer on outpatient pharmacy pick-up. As you enter the Pharmacy area, look for the red number dispenser. Take a number and have a seat. On the left hand wall, there is a number generator. When your number comes up on the black box, go to door #3 for a pharma-

cy consultation. A technician will verify your VA card information and submit your script to be filled. It may take as long as 30 minutes to fill your script, depending on patient volume. Watch for your name on the monitors located in the Pharmacy and Canteen, which means your script is ready.

If your script is not filled within a reasonable amount of time (30 minutes), please let a pharmacy tech know. Cooperation between staff and Veterans is essential, and we want to make your experience as pleasant and convenient as possible. We hope this system will reduce waiting time for our Veterans and improve overall efficiency.

Memorial Garden (Cont.)



Governor Chafee commends volunteers.

Garden area is a lasting tribute to a loved one, friend, or fellow Veteran. Once the garden is full, Voluntary Service will look at installing walkways or possibly memorial walls in other areas of the campus.

A formal dedication ceremony was held on May 24, 2012. Guest speakers for the ceremony included Governor Lincoln Chafee, Congressman

David Cicilline, Brigadier General Charles Petrarca, and Colonel (retired) Theodore Low. It was a fitting tribute to all those who have sacrificed so much to ensure the freedom of all Americans. Members of the Providence VAMC Veterans Recovery Resource Center's Horticultural Therapy Group will maintain the garden.

For further information on how to purchase a memorial brick, please contact Voluntary Service at 401-273-7100, extension 3002. These bricks are available to individuals, community residents, and groups who would like to memorialize a loved one or offer a message of thanks.

Armed Forces TV and Radio (AFVN)

By Ron Whitcomb

"Xin Loi, GI" - there were no emails or cell phone connections with the home front during the Vietnam War. Technology back then was limited to a portable cassette recorder or a cheap transistor radio, and when that was turned on it would be tuned to AFVN. AFVN kept us linked to what was happening in country and 'back in the world.' Their mission was to boost morale by providing commercial-free news reports, music, sports programming, broadcast command information, and counter-enemy

propaganda. AFVN began broadcasting from Saigon's Rex Hotel in August, 1962 but branched out to many sites including Qui Nhon, Chu Lai, Nha Trang, Da Nang, Hue and Pleiku. The original studio was operated on the cheap by a five-man crew and several volunteers who aired programs 18 hours a day. Programming increased to 24 hours a day as the US presence in Vietnam increased. Vietnam Veterans may recall being bombarded by command information spots on malaria pills, exotic R&R sites, bamboo vipers, mosquito nets, VD, the

GI Bill, black marketing, and illegal war trophies. Air Force DJ Adrian Cronauer was popular for "Good Morning Vietnam," which was made into a movie starring Robin Williams years later. AFVN served MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) for eleven years, during which time they were able to reach a half million troops a day from the Delta to the DMZ. The last station to shut down was the one in Saigon in 1973, where it all began with a mission of bringing the best in information, education, and entertainment to the troops.

AFVN reaches out from the Delta to the DMZ



Our New Look

By Bob Goudreau

The Veterans Watch newsletter has undergone some recent changes in format. Our resident staff advisor, Jessica B. Zuehlke, PsyD., has recently transferred to the VA in Long Beach, California. We thank Dr. Zuehlke for her input and layout of the original newsletter.

We decided to change the format, not only to honor Jessica's contributions but to show our Veterans that we are committed to working with Medical Center leadership to better serve our fellow Veterans. "By Veterans for Veterans" will continue to be our motto. If you would like to join our endeavor to include submitting an article, please contact Ron Whitcomb at tawodi11@aol.com.

Proposal For A Military Award Ribbon

Honoring America's Women Volunteers

By Melodie Mathews

Little recognition has been given to the brave women who volunteered to serve our great nation dating back as far as the Indian Wars.

Since that time, over two million women have joined the military and have taken part in every war and conflict our country has faced. Now is the time to acknowledge and reward our women warriors for their bravery, sacrifices and loyalty to the United States of America.

To help recognize women who have volunteered and served, I designed a ribbon and, on June 10 of this year, submitted it (along with a written proposal) to both the White House and 90 members of Congress.

The Ribbon Design



The black stripe on each end of the ribbon represents the brave women warriors who voluntarily sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. The yellow and white stripes encasing each wide band were chosen to honor all women volunteers, past and present, who served in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The black letters, "WV," found centered within the Marine Corps' red band stand for "Woman Volunteer." Veterans Watch will update you on the status of this request.

R.I. Lobster Facts: By Ron Reilly

As a lobster grows, it sheds its shell, increasing its weight by 25% each time. A lobster will shed its shell 24 times in the first year. It takes 18-24 months to develop from impregnation to the hatching of an egg. At hatching, the lobster is about the size of a mosquito, and it takes another 7 years to reach, "Legal Size," weighing about 1 pound. Lobsters catch fish, other crustaceans, and mollusks for food. They com-

monly store their food by burying it on the sea floor and guarding the area much like a dog.

The Pilgrims thought lobsters were ugly and considered them to be "poor man's meat." Times have changed, and what was once called "poor man's meat" has become a delicacy. Lobsters listen with their legs and taste with their feet. Plus, their teeth are in their stomach, and their kidneys are in their

head. Lobsters grow in every ocean of the world, but it is generally accepted that the best come from the cold waters off New England.

You can determine a lobster's age by taking its weight, multiplying it by 4, and adding 3 years. For example, a 4-pound lobster is 16 years + 3, or 19 years old. Supply and demand determine lobster pricing, that's why you see "market price."



Mr. Borge is a Peer Support Specialist

By Bob Goudreau

Mr. David Borge is a recent addition to the Providence VA Medical Center staff as a Peer Support Specialist. He is a graduate of the Peer Support Certification training hosted by the Medical Center's Psychosocial Recovery Resource Center or PRRC. As a Peer Support Specialist, David coordinates with other Mental Health Specialists and Peer Support Techs around the country to ensure Veterans receive training and support to live healthy and independent lives.



David comes to us after 25 years in the United States Army. He enlisted in the Army on March 6, 1984. He underwent basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, after which he went on to Advanced Individual Training in supply procedures also at Fort Jackson. His first duty assignment took him to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with the 82nd Airborne Division. His other duty assignments took him to Camp Humphreys, Korea, with the 501st Aviation. Returning to the states for a short period of time, Mr. Borge returned to Korea, this time serving at Camp Casey with the Second Infantry Division.

In December of 1989, David participated in Operation Just Cause in Panama. The following year he was deployed to Iraq for Operation Desert Storm. During his time in service, David received many awards and accolades to include two Meritorious Service Medals, an Army Commendation Medal with eight oak leaf clusters, an Army Achievement Medal with six oak leaf clusters, and six Good Conduct Medals, just to name a few. In addition to all the military schools and his regular duties, Mr. Borge was able to complete a Bachelor's Degree in General Education from Central Texas University. In August of 2009, David retired from the Army at the rank of Sergeant First Class.

We welcome David to the Providence VA Medical Center and thank him for his 25 years of outstanding service to his country and his ongoing support for Veterans throughout the VA system.

Quotable Quotes

“I think patriotism is like charity—it begins at home” Henry James

“It’s a recession when your neighbor loses his job; It’s a depression when you lose your own”

Harry S. Truman

“Experts often possess more data than judgment” Gen. Colin Powell

“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do what you want done because he wants to do it”

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower

“I’ll never be an old man. Old age is always 15 years older than I am” Francis Bacon

“Lead, follow or get out of my way” Gen. George S. Patton

“The obvious is not apparent to the uninformed” Bob Goudreau