

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits they have earned is by visiting their local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org.

JULY 2013



GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROVIDES CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR CALIFORNIA'S VETERANS

Long-pending benefits claims submitted by California veterans and caught in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) processing "log jam" could soon see the light of day. The newly signed Governor's Budget has authorized \$3 million and 36 limited-term positions that will allow the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to work with USDVA to help alleviate its massive veterans' claims backlog.

The money will be used to hire a "Strike Force" team of 12 Veterans Claims Representatives (VCR) for USDVA regional offices in Oakland, Los Angeles and San Diego to ensure

claims are properly developed and have all necessary documentation needed for adjudication.

"We appreciate the leadership of the Governor and the Speaker on this initiative as well as the Legislature's continued support of CalVet and its efforts to ensure the well-being of California veterans and their families," said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett. "Helping them get the benefits they so richly deserve after their honorable service to our country is the very least we can do for them."

CalVet has already begun advertising to fill the limited-term positions and

is looking to hire VCRs with previous veterans' benefits claims processing experience. The USDVA will provide office space, computers, phones and other equipment for the Strike Teams which will work under the supervision of CalVet regional office staff.

The Governor's Budget also includes a one-time augmentation of \$3 million in support of California's network of 56 County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO). Working closely with CalVet, the CVSOs work to connect veterans and their families with the state and federal benefits and the local services available to them.

"The CVSOs have proved time and time again that they are effective advocates for California veterans. This budget recognizes their hard work and provides them with the additional resources they need to

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Secretary's Message

The 4th of July, also called Independence Day, commemorates the adoption of our Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776 and celebrates our nation's freedoms and liberty.

Independence means many things to many people. To some it means having the freedom to express ones opinions without fear of reprisals, to others it means living free from tyranny, and to some it means being grateful to the men and women who have fought to maintain our American way of life.

Yet, for many people it is quite difficult to articulate what independence actually means to them. They have difficulty expressing what it means to be free and what it means to have liberty. So often in our comings and our goings, we forget that our freedoms did not come free. They came to us because of the service and sacrifices made over 200 years by members of our military and our veterans, many as members of our own families. They came to us because these men and women left their homes and families and laid down their lives for this beautiful land we call America. Amber waves of grain and purple mountains majesty barely scratch the surface of this land we love. Let us never forget those who have made this land what it is today.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said,
"So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire!

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York!

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring."

On this 4th of July, in addition to your barbecues, picnics camping trips or visit to your local movie theater, why not start some new 4th of July Independence Day traditions with your families and friends? Visit a veterans cemetery, read from a book about our Nation's history to your children, shake the hand of a member of the military or a veteran, proudly wave the American Flag on your home, or watch the family movie, "Yankee Doodle Dandy,"

a true story which celebrates our freedoms. Finally, on this and every day of the year, a great big "THANK YOU" to all members of our military and veterans for fighting for our freedoms.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Gravett, Major General (Ret)
Secretary, California Department of
Veterans Affairs

PHOTOGRAPHY HELPS WOUNDED WARRIORS HEAL

The fStop Warrior Project is no ordinary photography class. This 12-week program offered at Camp Pendleton, is part of a rehabilitation program for wounded, ill and injured veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. Led by distinguished photographer Terence Ford, the fStop Project's highest priority is to enable service members to discover both vocational and creative aptitudes in support of a successful life transition.

The fStop Warrior Project, made possible by the Tug McGraw Foundation, is clearly working. At a reception to unveil a photography exhibit at the State Capitol by the program's first graduating class, two of the artists, USMC Staff Sergeants Evan Ahlin and Joshua Ghering were on hand. They proudly and confidently spoke about the program and about their photographs to reception guests, including a number of California legislators, lobbyists, Foundation representatives, CalVet executive staff, members of the media and other exhibit admirers. Neither of the veterans could have been more composed or more impressive.

The fStop Project and its photography assignments are very personal to the veterans involved.



"Photography allows me to see the world in a different way – to express my emotions without feeling the need to talk about them." ~Evan

"All I see beyond the lens is beauty, serenity and peacefulness, healing my wounds." ~Ernesto

"PTSD has been a huge challenge for me these past few years, and I finally have found my way of coping." ~Jennifer

Ford, who created the program at the Foundation's request, felt initial trepidation. He now readily admits, "I get far more out of working with these veterans than they get from me. They are an amazing group," he said.

After a week on display at the State Capitol, the photographs will be taken to Fullerton, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Details of where and when the exhibitions will take place are being worked out.

The Tug McGraw Foundation works to improve the quality of life for people with brain-related trauma and tumors. The Foundation was created by its namesake, a professional baseball relief pitcher and father of Country and Western superstar, Tim McGraw, after being diagnosed with brain cancer in 2003.

For more information about the fStop Warrior Project, go to www.fstopwarriorproject.org.

<< BUDGET

better serve our veterans," said Secretary Gravett.

In other areas, the Budget provides for a General Fund loan of up to \$1.5 million for the preliminary plans and working drawings for the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery. The cemetery will be built on the grounds of the former Fort Ord U.S. Army post located on Monterey Bay.

The Budget also provides funding that will allow the Veterans Home of California, West Los Angeles to convert 84 beds from skilled nursing level of care to independent living, thus allowing the department to serve a broader population of veterans. Funding is also included for the Veterans Homes of California in Fresno and Redding which will allow CalVet to begin admitting residents in the Fall of this year.

ONE OF THE GREATEST VICTORIES IN NAVAL HISTORY

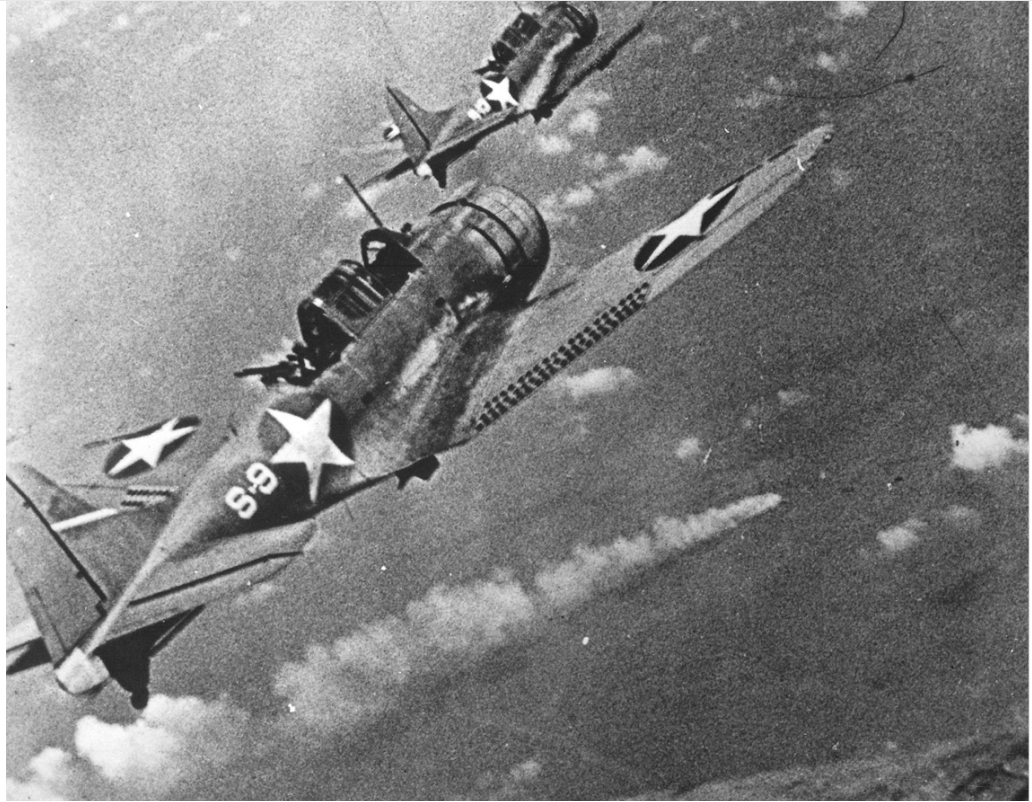
VENTURA VETERANS HOME RESIDENT REMEMBERS BATTLE OF MIDWAY

By Jeanne Bonfilio

It was 70 years ago that the Battle of Midway changed the course of World War II. Between June 4 and 7, 1942, only six months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States Navy decisively defeated an Imperial Japanese Navy attack against the small Midway atoll in the Pacific, inflicting irreparable damage on the Japanese fleet. It has been called one of the most important naval battles of the Pacific Campaign of World War II.

On June 5, in commemoration of that storied battle and victory, Ventura Veterans Home residents gathered with scores of members of the U.S. Navy and other military personnel, veterans and guests at a special ceremony held at the Naval Base Ventura County.

Holding his hat over his heart, Ventura Veterans Home resident Harold Wilder stood with at least a dozen other Home residents during the singing of the National Anthem. Though serving in the Army in



Europe during World War II, Wilder explained how the Battle of Midway changed everything. "This is when we began to feel less vulnerable," said Wilder.

According to Captain Todd Watkins, Deputy Commodore of the Airborne Command Control and Logistics Wing and guest speaker at the event, "The weeks leading up to the Battle of Midway were America's darkest hours in the Pacific. We had no battleships. The Japanese had 11. We had only three carriers. They had eight. We had no right to win. But in a single, masterful stroke, a battered U.S. Navy and Marine Corps halted the Japanese advance. To this day, the American action at Midway stands out as one of the greatest victories in naval history."

The Battle of Midway has been called the turning point for the U.S. forces in the Pacific Theater of

Operations. "This battle ... turned the tide, turned the war around and got us moving in the right direction," said Captain Dave Sasek, Chief Staff Officer, Naval Base Ventura County. Military historian John Keegan also called it, "The most stunning and decisive blow in the history of naval warfare. It was Japan's worst naval defeat in 350 years."

"It means an awful lot," added Navy veteran and Home resident Ray Daniel. "We need to remember those who died, gave their lives. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them."



Anne Sexton (L) takes home the Gold medal for the Woman's 25 meter Back-Stroke competition.

VETERANS HOMES RESIDENTS WIN MEDALS AT NATIONAL VETERANS GAMES

By Jeanne Bonfilio/ Kenneth Schmidt

The Veterans Homes of California—Barstow and West Los Angeles sent three residents to this year's National Golden Age Games and they returned home with medals for their efforts. Barstow was proud to be represented by Anne Sexton, Army, and Roy Rivera, Army, and West Los Angeles was represented by one of its first residents, Miguel Gonzalez. Ms. Sexton brought home the Gold in the age 55-59 age group Woman's 25 meters Back-Stroke in swimming and the Silver in the 55-59 age group Women's 50 meters Back-Stroke and Mr. Gonzales brought home a Silver Medal in the Checkers competition. The 2013 National Veterans Golden Age Games were held this year in Buffalo, New York from May 30 through June 4.

Held at a different site each year, this exciting, annual event brings together veterans from across the country to compete in such events as: bowling, swimming, pool, dominos, ping-pong, bicycling, golf, table tennis, checkers and more. Sexton and Rivera combined to represent the Barstow Home in five of the 18 events and West LA's Gonzales represented that home in checkers and dominos. Ms. Sexton also participated in a new non-medaled sport called "Sled Hockey." As the name suggests, the hockey player sits on a sled and propels themselves with the use of two hockey sticks.

To be eligible, participants must be age 55 or older and currently receiving inpatient or outpatient care from the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Events are divided

into seven age classifications: 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, and 85+. Ms. Sexton and Mr. Rivera were part of a team representing VA Loma Linda Healthcare System and Mr. Gonzalez, along with others, represented the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (GLA).

This year's event, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Veterans Canteen Services and hosted by the VA Western New York Healthcare System, was held at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. The event helps to promote a healthy lifestyle, cultivates friendly competition, and provides camaraderie and fun!

According to David J. West, VA Network 2 Director and Brian Stiller, VA Health Care Upstate New York Medical Center Director, "The Games are a culmination of VA's healthy living message to veterans: be physically active. Physical exercise and a little competition among former soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, is part of VA's health and rehabilitation regime to ensure veterans live mentally, physically and spiritually at their highest level."

This is the second year that residents from the Veterans Home of California—West Los Angeles have participated in the Games and the second year in a row that Gonzalez was sponsored to attend by American Legion Pacific Palisades Post 283.

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VETERANS FRAUD ALERT

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has been notified that veterans registered on the VetSuccess career website have been contacted by fraudulent companies requesting personally identifiable information. Disclosing such information can put you at risk for identity theft.

If you are contacted by an individual or company that is requesting to communicate with you through e-mail, instant messaging or other nontraditional marketing methods, do not respond or click on any links sent to you. Most importantly, DO NOT give any personal information to the sender. If you suspect that you may be victim of these suspicious activities, please contact the www.vetsuccess.gov team at (202) 461-9600.

<< MEDALS

Gonzalez, a Vietnam-era veteran of the United States Army, said, "I want to express my appreciation to American Legion Post 283 for allowing me to participate in the National Veterans Golden Age Games. The American Legion has helped and supported veterans all across our nation, as well as all of the Veterans Homes of California."

The Barstow veterans' trip to the Golden Age Games was funded by the annual Mud Run sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Barstow. The Run benefits the residents of the Barstow Home, and last year the Kiwanis presented the home with over \$7,000 from this event.



Back at the West Los Angeles Veterans Home, resident Miguel Gonzalez proudly wears his Silver Medal and poses next to the U.S. Army Flag.

The checkers competition could take several hours or even an entire day. Gonzalez explained further, "You keep playing until you lose. When the final two players advance, then you play for the Silver and Gold Medals. It was a wonderful experience and I really enjoyed it. It also brings back fond memories of playing checkers with my grandfather while growing up in El Paso, Texas."

It was clear when he was presented with a Silver Medal, that Gonzalez' checker-playing with his grandfather paid off. "It was great!" he said. "And it sure was a lot of fun." He encourages residents from all the Veterans Homes of California to participate in the future. "It would be wonderful to see more veterans attend," he said. It is great to see some of the same faces each year."

Congratulations our resident competitors, Ann Sexton for her Gold and Silver, Miguel Gonzalez for his Silver and for Roy Rivera for his participation! CalVet hopes to increase its presence next year by involving more of the veterans home's residents.

More information on the National Veterans Golden Age Games, go to www.va.gov/opa/speceven/gag/index.asp.

VETERANS BENEFITS FOR NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE

There is often confusion about whether National Guard and Reserve veterans are entitled to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) benefits. Generally, all Guard and Reserve members qualify for some USDVA benefits, but eligibility factors vary benefit to benefit. Those factors include length of service, type of service (such as under Title 10 or 32), wartime service and/or service-related disability.

Traditional National Guard and Reserve members typically serve one weekend a month and two weeks a year. Active Guard Reserve (AGR) members are full-time members or a Reserve component for which they are entitled to receive pay from the federal government. As an AGR, you establish eligibility for certain USDVA benefits by your active service under either Title 10 or 32.

Wartime service is also a factor in awarding benefits to Guard and Reserve veterans. Under current law, the USDVA recognizes the following wartime periods:

- World War I (April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918);
- World War II (December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946);
- Korean conflict (June 27, 1950 – January 31, 1955);
- Vietnam era (February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975 for veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; otherwise, August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975);
- Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – through a future date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation).

USDVA benefits for Guard and Reserve veterans may include disability compensation, pension, home loan guarantee, education, healthcare, vocational rehabilitation and employment, insurance and burial.

To learn about and to apply for your USDVA National Guard and Reserve veteran benefits, go to www.ebenefits.va.gov or to www.benefits.va.gov/guardreserve. You may also contact your County Veterans Service Office for information and assistance. To find the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org. Click on Contact Us, and then click on your county of residence.

REOPENING A CLAIM FOR BENEFITS

By Joe Wright

For a veteran whose claim for benefits has been decided in a way the veteran believes is appropriate, there may be recourse.

A veteran may reopen a finally adjudicated claim by submitting new and material evidence. New evidence means existing evidence not previously submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). Material evidence means existing evidence that, by itself or when considered with previous evidence, relates to an un-established fact necessary to substantiate the claim. New and material evidence can be neither cumulative nor redundant of the evidence of record and must raise a reasonable possibility of substantiating the claim. New and material evidence received prior to the expiration of the appeal period, or prior to the appeal decision if a timely appeal has been filed, will be considered as having been filed in connection with the claim which was pending at the beginning of the appeal period.

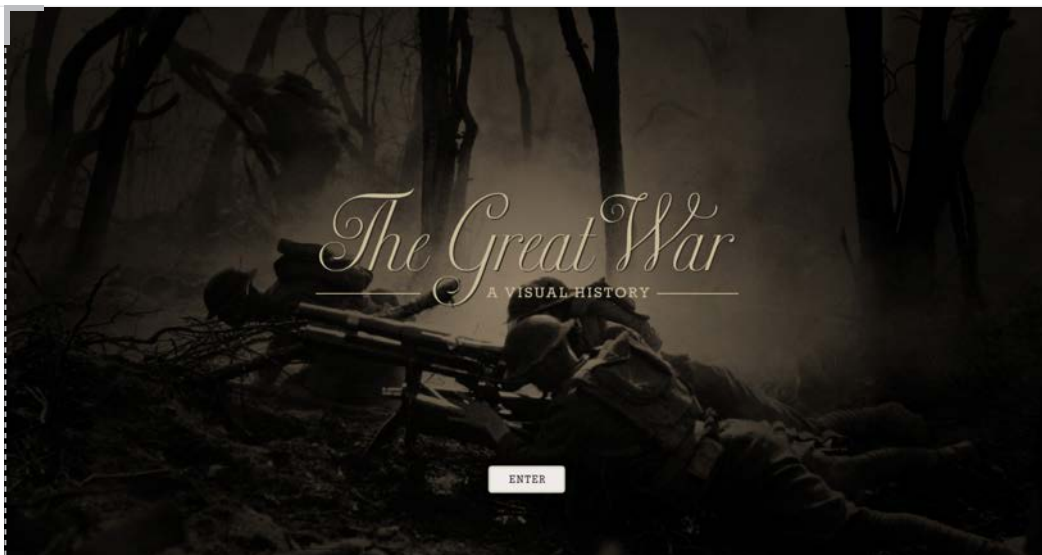
Once a decision is made, if USDVA receives or associates relevant

<< CLAIM

official service department records that existed and had not been associated with the claim when the claim was first decided, USDVA will reconsider the claim. These records may include service records that are related to a claimed in-service event, injury, or disease; additional service records forwarded by the Department of Defense or the service department any time after USDVA's original request for service records; or declassified records that could not have been obtained because the records were classified when USDVA decided the claim. This does not apply to records that USDVA could not have obtained when it decided the claim because the records did not exist, or because the veteran failed to provide sufficient information for USDVA to identify and obtain the records.

For information about your veterans benefits or for assistance with filing a claim, contact your County Veterans Service Office. To find the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org, click on Contact Us, and then click on your county of residence.

Retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Joe Wright is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County.



INTERACTIVE TIMELINE AND MAP ALLOWS USERS TO EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF WWI

Now you can experience the history of World War I, "The Great War," through an interactive timeline and map available on the American Battle Monuments Commission's (ABMC) website.

This new visual interactive timeline and map is the latest in digital initiatives released by ABMC. It is designed to allow the user to view the key events of World War I across time or geography. Free to all users via the ABMC Multimedia webpage, it's a strong tool for helping students or history buffs understand the key events of World War I.

More than two million Americans served in Europe during World War I. Approximately 116,500

American servicemen and women died overseas during the war. Of that number 30,922 are interred and another 4,452 individuals are memorialized in America's eight World War I commemorative cemeteries overseas administered by ABMC.

Established in 1923, ABMC commemorates the service, achievements and sacrifice of the U.S. Armed forces. ABMC administers 24 cemeteries and 25 monuments, memorials and markers overseas. For more information, visit www.abmc.gov.

REPEAT BRAIN INJURY RAISES SOLDIERS' SUICIDE RISK

People in the military who suffer more than one mild traumatic brain injury face a significantly higher risk of suicide, according to research by the National Center for Veterans Studies at the University of Utah.

A survey of 161 military personnel who were stationed in Iraq and evaluated for a possible traumatic brain injury—also known as TBI—showed that the risk for suicidal thoughts or behaviors increased not only in the short term, as measured during the past 12 months, but during the individual's lifetime.

The risk of suicidal thoughts increased significantly with the number of TBIs, even when controlling for other psychological factors, the researchers say in a paper recently published online in *JAMA Psychiatry*, a specialty journal of the American Medical Association.

"Up to now, no one has been able to say if multiple TBIs, which are common among combat veterans, are associated with higher suicide risk or not," says the study's lead author, Craig J. Bryan, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Utah and associate director of the National Center for Veterans Studies. "This study suggests they are, and it provides valuable information for professionals treating wounded combat servicemen and women to help manage the risk of suicide."

Results showed that one in five patients (21.7 percent) who had ever sustained more than one TBI reported thoughts about or preoccupation with suicide at any time in the past. For patients who had received one TBI, 6.9 percent reported having suicidal thoughts, and zero percent for those with no TBIs. In evaluating the lifetime risk, patients were asked if they had ever experienced suicidal thoughts and behaviors up to the point they were assessed.

Researchers found that multiple TBIs also were associated with a significant increase in other psychological symptoms already tied to single traumatic head injuries, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD, and the severity of the concussive symptoms. However, only the increase in depression severity predicted an increased suicide risk.

"That head injury and resulting psychological effects increase the risk of suicide is not new," says Bryan. "But knowing that repetitive TBIs may make patients even more vulnerable provides a new insight for attending to military personnel over the long term, particularly when they are experiencing added emotional distress in their lives."

Source: University of Utah News Release 5/13/13

4 VETERANS GRADUATE FROM 'THE PATHWAY HOME'

Three U.S. Army veterans and one former Marine recently graduated from The Pathway Home, a treatment program for returning veterans based at the Veterans Home of California in Yountville.

Soldiers Jeryl Adams, Jacob Stambaugh and Anthony Collins and Marine Noe Acosta were recognized for completing the program before about 150 people gathered for the graduation ceremonies at Yountville Community Center.

The Pathway Home is a residential treatment program for veterans returning from Afghanistan or Iraq who have mental health issues, such as PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) or TBI (traumatic brain injury).

An estimated one in three returning veterans experiences some degree of PTSD or TBI, according to national statistics released at the graduation ceremonies.

"We have a major public health problem -- it affects not only the veterans but also their families, the schools, their children," program executive director Fred Gusman

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HOMEOWNERSHIP POSSIBLE FOR LOW-INCOME VETERAN FAMILIES

By Sarah Steffan

Growing up, Jose C. always wondered what living in a home, instead of an apartment, would feel like. He joined the Marine Corps in 2006 to provide a better life for his family, hoping to one day have a chance to own a home for himself and his son to live in.

After serving two deployments in Iraq, Jose came home to a junior one-bedroom apartment that he shared with his mother and son. Jose spent most of 2012 trying to apply for home loans through the VA, but there was no outcome, and at the end of the year, he was still living in the small space with his mother and son.

He gave up. Jose figured that with his income and no results after a year of trying, there was no way to get a home.

In 2012, Habitat for Humanity San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valleys, the North Los Angeles affiliate of Habitat for Humanity, announced their collaboration with the California Department of Veteran Affairs to build 100 homes for veterans in North LA County.

Jose applied as soon as he heard the news and is now approved to own his very first, and very own, four bedroom/three bath house in Sylmar, California. He will live in a community with 11 other veterans and their families. The gated community will have an urban community garden, park area for the children and all of the families will have access to free social services to assist with mental health, financial literacy, job preparedness, and more.

Jose couldn't be more excited. "As an adult, my goal is to own my own home and for my son to be able to experience having his own bedroom where he

<< GRADUATES

told the crowd. "It's a community problem -- not a problem just for Veteran's Affairs."

Gusman said The Pathway Home was "designed to embrace community" and includes sessions on mindfulness and brotherhood with the local Rotary Club. Artwork and poems done by the veterans to express their emotions were displayed at the ceremonies.

More than 380 veterans have been treated since The Pathway Home was launched in January 2008. Officials are seeking long-term funding since a private grant that supported the program for the first three years has run out.

Other donations have since kept it going, but The Pathway Home does not receive state or federal funding.

For more information, contact Mike Horak, Development Director, at 707-948-3028 or mike.horak@thepathwayhome.org, or visit www.thepathwayhome.org.

Posted by Keri Brenner (Editor)

June 11, 2013 at 09:28 am

www.napavalley.patch.com

<< HOME

can be as messy as he wants: shoes not put away, toys on the floor, posters of his favorite wrestlers and quarterback, Tony Roma on the walls; he's a big cowboys fan. At the end of the day, I want to be able to say to my son those famous words: CLEAN UP YOUR ROOM!"

The 12-home "enriched" community in Sylmar is the first of several communities of this kind. The second is an 87-home community in Santa Clarita, California. The Santa Clarita Community will have four bedroom/three bath homes and single-story three bedroom/two bath fully ADA-compliant homes for disabled veterans.

One of the first to be approved for the Santa Clarita community is Army veteran, Josh T. Josh currently lives with his wife and three boys, Ethan, 4; Aydan, 3; and Bryson, 1 in his wife's parents' three bedroom/two bath home—a total of seven people and two dogs.

He is excited to have not only a home for himself and his family, but a chance to live a real community. "We applied to the Habitat program because we love the idea of living in a community of veterans. A military community can be a tight-knit group. We would love to have neighbors that we can eventually consider family."

California veterans making a combined family income between \$45,000 and \$83,650 should apply now for a home with Habitat for



Josh T. and family.

Humanity San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys (SF/SCV).

Jose, Josh and the 97 additional families moving into the Sylmar and Santa Clarita enriched neighborhoods will not only receive a home with an affordable 30-40 year mortgage—on which they will pay no more than 35% of their monthly income for mortgage payments, taxes, HOA dues, and water—they will receive transitional services to help them become more successful and self-sufficient.

These services are what make up the "enrichment" part of the Habitat for Humanity SF/SCV neighborhoods. Habitat for Humanity SF/SCV works with other non-profits, local businesses and community organizations to provide services free of charge to the families 6-12 months before and up to 18 months after move in. These services include financial literacy training workshops, healthy eating/active living workshops, disaster preparedness courses, homework

help for the children, and more. This neighborhood will also include services specifically designed for veterans and their families. This includes PTSD counseling, A Window Between Worlds therapeutic art programs for trauma victims, veteran peer-to-peer dialogue, domestic violence counseling, ensuring connections to benefits and more.

This opportunity is wonderful for veterans of any age, branch of service, or conflict. Minimum qualifications include Honorable Character of Discharge, and a minimum household income of \$45,000 (Sylmar) or \$53,000 (Santa Clarita). Income includes any Social Security or VA disability payments.

To apply, contact Habitat for Humanity SF/SCV at (818) 884-8808 or email FamilySelection@HumanityCA.org.

Sarah Steffan is Manager of Marketing and Development for Habitat for Humanity.



CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY RECOGNIZES EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS OF VETERANS

By Jaime Arteaga

Countless family, friends, and supporters gathered on June 26, 2013, at the Sacramento Convention Center to recognize the extraordinary and brave achievements of 67 California military members being honored as 2013 Veterans of the Year by members of California's State Assembly.

Enveloped by a spirit of patriotism, attendees heard heartfelt presentations by Assembly members and spine-tingling tales of bravery, commitment, and selfless service by ordinary people who did extraordinary things while wearing our nation's military uniforms. Following are two of the honorees.

MELVIN FEUER

Melvin Feuer enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in 1942 and was awarded the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters. A ball turret armorer gunner in a B-24 bomber, he was captured by the Nazis and imprisoned for a year in the infamous Stalag 17 after his plane was shot down on his 24th mission. As the end of the war approached, the Nazis marched him and his fellow prisoners across Austria where he was liberated by American troops. He later spent 36 years as a teacher and elementary school principal, and taught aspiring teachers at the California State University. For the last 20 years, he has volunteered with the Maple Counseling Center in Beverly Hills, inspiring students to combat bullying and maintain integrity in their daily

lives. He and his wife, Stella, have been married 60 years.

Recognized by: Assemblyman Mike Feuer

BILL STEELE

Bill Steele joined the United States Marine Corps in December of 1941 shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was assigned to the 28th Marine Regiment and saw action in Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and participated in the landings on Okinawa. Originally from Santa Barbara, he returned to Okinawa after the war to help rebuild the island. While there, he met his wife, Toki. They currently reside in North San Juan where they own and operate a restaurant.

Recognized by: Assemblyman Dan Logue

To view the full list of California's 2013 Veterans of the Year, go to www.calvet.ca.gov/News/Newsletters.aspx.

USDVA BRIEFS

VA PROCESSES NEARLY ALL DISABILITY CLAIMS PENDING OVER 2 YEARS, MOVES TO COMPLETE THOSE OLDER THAN 1 YEAR

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that, as a result of the initiative launched in April to expedite disability compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited a year or longer, more than 65,000-claims – or 97 percent of all claims over two years old in the inventory – have been eliminated from the backlog.

<http://1.usa.gov/14Mh3Z6>

NEW TECHNOLOGY IN PLACE FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF VETERANS' DISABILITY CLAIMS

A new online application from the Department of Veterans Affairs enables disability compensation claims to be processed faster in a more end-to-end electronic environment, and VA is urging Veterans and their Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representatives to make full use of its capabilities to receive speedier decisions and reduce the backlog of claims.

<http://1.usa.gov/13SHqLR>

VA HIRES OVER 1600 MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO MEET GOAL, EXPANDS ACCESS TO CARE AND OUTREACH EFFORTS, DIRECTS NATIONWIDE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SUMMITS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has met the goal to hire 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in President Obama's Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families.

<http://1.usa.gov/11e31d6>

TELEHEALTH AND VET CENTERS: TWO RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

In addition to VA Medical Centers, Veterans may receive mental counseling using Vet Centers and telehealth technology.

<http://1.usa.gov/11wk9uZ>

VA STARTS CAMPAIGN TO RAISE PTSD AWARENESS

In observance of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) awareness month, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD invites the public to participate in its "Take the Step" campaign.

<http://1.usa.gov/130zJVS>

VETERANS

Getting the benefits you've earned?

Aware of benefit changes?

Know where to find services?

Download the CalVet mobile app and stay informed!



CALVET
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

www.calvet.ca.gov

VETERANS, ESPECIALLY FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS, CAN GET ONE OF THE BEST HOME LOAN VALUES IN CALIFORNIA

CALVET
HOME LOANS



The CalVet Home Loan is the best loan on the market especially for veterans purchasing their first home in California. Competitive interest rates and low down to no down payment will help you qualify for a higher loan amount while keeping your monthly payment affordable.

For more information contact the California Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Program at (800) 952-LOAN (5626) or visit us at www.calvet.ca.gov/homeloans

CALVET
VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA
BARSTOW

The Veterans Home of California—Barstow is a 400-bed, long-term care facility located on 22 acres with a panoramic view of the Mojave River Valley.

The Home offers three levels of care that provide continuity in the lives of Veteran residents in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

1. Domiciliary Care (Independent living) for Veterans who are self-sufficient and do not require assistance with activities of daily living.
2. Intermediate Nursing Care for Veterans requiring some nursing assistance to perform activities of daily living.
3. Skilled Nursing Care for Veterans who require a higher level of nursing care and require assistance with many activities of daily living.

Amenities include: room and board – three meals plus snacks; medical care and medications; optical care, dental care and podiatry services; transportation services to all medical appointments and off-campus activities; and much more.

Spouses are also eligible to apply with the Veteran.



For admission information, contact:

Veterans Home of California—Barstow
100 E. Veterans Parkway
Barstow, CA 92311
(800) 746-0606, ext. 1
www.calvet.ca.gov

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY 10-15

**Vietnam Veterans Memorial
"The Wall that Heals"**
American Legion Post 267
LaHabra High School Stadium
LaHabra, CA
Contact: Jim Lozano (714) 526-0564

JULY 12-14

San Diego Veteran Stand Down
Veterans Village of San Diego
San Diego High School
1405 Park Blvd., San Diego, CA
Contact: (619) 497-0142

JULY 13

**NORCAL Joining Community Forces
Resource/Employment/Education Fair**
11:00a.m. - 3:00p.m.
B.T. Collins Army Reserve Center
Sacramento, CA

JULY 13

VA and CalVet Health and Resource Fair
9:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.
Hanford Veterans Memorial Building
Hanford, CA
Contact: Curtis Johnson
(559) 225-6100 ext. 5196

JULY 15

East Bay Veterans Fair
9:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.
Concord Hilton, Concord, CA

JULY 17

**Veterans Service Providers
at the California State Fair**
10 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Sacramento, CA

JULY 18

Embracing our Female Veterans
Christ Episcopal Church
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
1700 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda, CA
Contact: (800) 838-3006

JULY 18-21

Vietnam War Memorial Exhibit
Woodbridge Community Park, Irvine, CA

JULY 26-28

Ventura County Stand Down
CA Army National Guard Armory
Ventura, CA
Contact: Claire Hope (805) 630-2431

AUGUST 1

Vet2Vet Empowerment Connect Meeting
3:30p.m. - 4:30p.m.
San Bernardino Vet Center, Colton, CA
Contact: (909) 801-5762

AUGUST 3

Veterans "Summer Celebration" Picnic
12:00p.m. - 5:00p.m.
VA West LA Healthcare System "Grand
Lawn"
Los Angeles, CA
Contact: (310) 490-6495

Note: To view full calendar, visit www.calvet.ca.gov/Files/Events_Calendar.pdf

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