



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

VAF, 312 Superior Avenue, Tomah, WI 54660 866-823-8387 www.vafvets.org Visit us on Twitter & Facebook  

Summer 2014

SERVING WISCONSIN'S AND THE NATION'S HOMELESS VETERANS FOR OVER 20 YEARS

CHRISTOPHER HANSON VAF NEW PRESIDENT/CEO



Congratulations and welcome aboard to new Veterans Assistance Foundation President/CEO Christopher Hanson! Mr. Hanson lives in the town of Angelo with his fiancé, Jaime, his stepson Dylan and daughter Braelyn. He comes to us from the Greater Tomah Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau where he served as Executive Director for nearly nine years in Tomah, Wisconsin. He has served on

the VAF board of directors since 2011, most recently as the Chairman. Christopher is also a U.S. Navy reservist.

"I'm absolutely honored the board brought me in as the new President/CEO," he said. "I'm truly passionate about helping veterans and now I get to do it every day."

With a strong background in leadership, advertising, promotion

and public relations, Mr. Hanson's experience will help to promote VAF's mission and lead the organization into the future. One of his first goals is to help increase the local and regional awareness of the VAF name and mission.

"It is extremely important to get our name out there in a positive manner," he said. "Good publicity translates into more successful programs through donations and improving our relations with partner organizations."

Christopher Hanson's military experience is extensive, having traveled across five continents and 27 countries. He joined the Navy in July 1991. He was a combat corpsman attached to the Marine Corps until 1999, when he transferred to Fleet Hospital-Great Lakes. In 2005, he was selected as a Chief Petty Officer (E-7) and again as a Senior Chief Petty Officer (E-8) in 2008. In 2012, he was appointed as an Ensign in public affairs. Just last month, he was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade.

His excitement shows when he talks to different people about the program. "Thanks to VAF Founder/Chairman Bob Piaro and the rest of the Board of Directors for believing in me. I look forward to making the most out of this incredible opportunity."

FRIENDS OF VETERANS – POKER RUN DONATION



Pictured is Friends President Vickie Hilliard presenting the check to VAF VP/COO Colin Moten, along with FOV members and the staff of VAF.

Thank you very much to Friends of Veterans (FOV) – Tomah. They stopped by and presented the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) with a check for \$10,000 in July! The money was raised through a raffle for a Victory Vegas 8-Ball motorcycle and the FOV annual Bike Blessing and Poker Run with all pro-

ceeds coming to VAF. A special thank you to Rod's Powersports for working with the FOV to help make the bike raffle happen.

With this donation, the Veterans Assistance Foundation was able to purchase a much needed enclosed trailer that will allow us to transport large items donated to the Veterans and to haul any large items needed when we participate in community events and Stand Downs. We will also be able to pay off a loan on one of our vans that is used to transport Veterans to work, job interviews, school, off site medical appointments (when necessary) and community events.

A BIG thank you to Friends of Veterans for their continued support to VAF; your donations have helped our resident veterans more than you could ever know!

VAF RECEIVES GOLF OUTING DONATION

A very special thank you to Walker Stainless Equipment Company of New Lisbon, Wisconsin! Each year the Walker Stainless Equipment Company selects a nonprofit to support with fundraising efforts during their annual golf outing.

In June we were presented a donation check for \$1,152 by Nancy Jacques and Jim Arzt from the Walker Human Resources department at the New Lisbon plant. The money was raised at their annual golf outing by Walker staff and family members.

Thank you Walker Stainless for selecting the Veterans

Assistance Foundation, Inc. as your organization to support this year!

Pictured, L-R: Chris Hanson and Colin Moten with the Veterans Assistance Foundation and Nancy Jacques and Jim Arzt of Walker Stainless Equipment Company.



VAMC EVENT TO BENEFIT HOMELESS VETERANS

Taken from the Tomah Journal-May 18, 2014

The Veterans Assistance Foundation helps between 120-150 homeless veterans in Tomah each year. The VAF provides veterans with a place to live, meals, health care and financial counseling to get them off the street and supporting themselves.

The Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center, which partners with the VAF to provide veterans' services, collected donations for the VAF at its fourth annual VA2K Walk and Roll event. Rather than pay a registration fee for the two kilometer walk, which began at noon outside of Building 400 at the VAMC, organizers asked for voluntary donations to VAF. The event is part of a national VA effort designed to promote wellness and support the homeless. According to organizer Gail Bertolino, "Everyone wants to know how to help, but aren't sure how."

The event helps veterans leaving the program at the medical center to "either move out on their own, or we also have a step-up program where they are able to live in a house provided by VAF with two other veterans," says VAF Staff Faye Rainey, but they have to be working on their goals. The veterans pay program fees of \$300.00

per month and in exchange the VAF takes care of their monthly housing and utilities and buy most of their food. That financial help lets veterans save money to prepare for living on their own while having more independence than they would at the VAMC. "It really gives them the opportunity to stay focused," Rainey said.

The event staff collected donations of personal hygiene items, small household appliances and cleaning and laundry supplies that will be given to veterans when leaving the program to help them get started in their new independent lives. "We don't want them not having a towel to dry off with. We want them to have the things they need to be successful," she said.

The VA2K is meant to promote healthy activity in employees, as well. "It was National Employee Wellness Day. The short walk is a way for people who don't do a lot of exercising to ease into an active lifestyle," said Bertolino. The VAMC provided refreshments, including granola bars, bananas and water for the participants. The registration started at noon and Zumba at 12:15 p.m. The 2K walk began at 12:30 p.m. and yoga began at 1:00 p.m.

STAFF CPR TRAINING CERTIFICATION

Each year, over 300,000 Americans die from heart disease and half of the victims suffer from cardiac arrest. Rescue breathing coupled with chest compressions can help save a life. This technique is known as CPR.

In April the Veteran Assistance Foundation (VAF) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) staff joined together with the American Red Cross to complete First Aid/CPR/AED training. Completion of this training is a vital competent of VAF to ensure a safer environment for the Veterans

we serve, as well as for our staff.

This training not only teaches the proper way to perform CPR/AED, but gives our employees the needed confidence on how to stay calm and make wiser decisions during an emergency situation whether at work, home or in public. All staff members who have completed this training are now certified through the American Red Cross to preform CPR/First Aid/AED during emergency situations. This certification is good up to two years.



COMBAT VETERANS MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION DONATIONS

In May, the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association donated 15 sets of dishes, glasses, silverware, hand towels and serving utensils to the Union Grove VAP. These items will be used for the Veterans who successfully graduate from our program to start them out with a few items for their new homes.

A couple of months ago when the group was here, they noticed that our treadmill was not operational. When they brought the dishes on May 5th, they also bought us a brand-new treadmill. A few of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association members brought it inside and assembled it for us. These items were all purchased from the proceeds of their spaghetti dinner fundraiser that was held on March 22nd in Racine.

Thank you to all the members of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association for your generous donation of your time to put on the events, which enable you to purchase the items listed above to give to the Veterans who participate in our program. Also thank you for the treadmill, dishes, glasses, etc. They will all be put to good use. Your generosity is much appreciated.



Pictured above is Melissa Taggart, Director of the VAP, along with members of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association.

IN SOME SMALL WAY



My name is Sue Hutchins. I am a twenty-year veteran and a 5th grade teacher in Cashton. Each year, my students become

— *SMALL WAY, continued on page 3*

part of a group called, "Cashton's Youth Supporting Troops and Veterans". We have been doing this since Desert Storm.

The kids also perform a song during the Veterans Day Program we hold at our school. For many years, I MC'd the event. In the past, most of our efforts have gone to

soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, sending letters and care packages.

With the changing times and more veterans coming back to the states with no place to go, we decided to shift our efforts and help the homeless veterans here in Wisconsin. Attached is a check for \$199.25.

We know it isn't a lot, but we hope and pray that it helps in some small way.

I have also enclosed a picture of the "crew".

A big Thank You to Sue Hutchins and her "crew". Your donation is much appreciated and will be put to very good use.

NECEDAH AMERICAN LEGION DONATION

On June 17, 2014, two members of the Necedah American Legion Post 277 stopped at the Veterans Assistance Foundation in Tomah and donated a much appreciated "goodie bag" that included underwear, T-shirts, socks and personal hygiene items. The Veterans here at VAF are very thankful for this generous donation of these much needed daily items.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Members of the Necedah American Legion Post 277 for taking the time to think of the Veterans in our programs and to complete the "goodie bags" that were delivered to these Veterans.

The generosity of organizations such as yours helps us to help the Veterans who are in need. Thank you.



Pictured with The American Legion Members are VAF residents John W. (2nd from left), Tym P. (3rd from left), John G. (5th from left) and Chris F. (far right).

FEED MY PEOPLE FOOD CHALLENGE

Feed My People in Eau Claire, Wisconsin held a food challenge to help out local member organizations. For every dollar raised by member organizations during a 6 week period from June 2-July 14, Feed My People matched it with a pound of food.

The Chippewa Falls Veterans Housing Program hosted an open house and reached out to the surrounding community. The community and its organizations came together and raised just under \$4,000. The \$3,797, plus 3,797 pounds of food will be used to help feed the veterans of VAF while

they participate in our program.

Thank you, Chippewa Valley, for coming together for a good cause and helping the Veterans Assistance Foundation assist the Veterans we serve within the Chippewa Falls Veterans Housing Program.

VAF PARTICIPATES AT JUNEAU COUNTY REALITY FAIR

On Tuesday, April 15th, VAF staff participated in the Juneau County Reality Fair as one of the booth volunteers. The Reality Fair is designed to give high school students a chance to "experience" what life is like after high school.

The students were able to choose their career, but then were randomly given a spouse and children. They received a checkbook and a credit card with a limit of \$1,000. They had to visit several booths that were set up, including: Bank/ Uncle Sam, housing, insurance, vehicles, recreational, clothing, groceries, charities, second job, Save Our Souls (SOS), credit card payment, utilities, convenience store and fate (where they would draw a piece of paper from a box and it would have a good fate or bad fate experience stated on it).

While at each booth, they had to pay "bills" with their allotted allowance for the month. They also had police officers giving out tickets randomly that the student would have to pay. The goal of the exercise was for the student to hopefully have some money left at the end of visiting all of the booths. Many students found themselves with not much left over or would have to take items back to get refunds so they could pay for necessities.

It was an educational experience for the students and they were able to see just how much day-to-day living costs. This has hopefully helped them understand the importance of budgeting their money.



RESIDENTS OF THE MONTH TOMAH VAF

May 2014:

Richard V.

Richard has taken it upon himself to clean areas that are not on his duty list. He has helped staff and other residents when needed. Richard is in school to help better his future and was recently on the President's list for good grades at WTC. Way to Go, Richard!

June 2014:

Tom M.

Tom always has a joke or something comical to say to put a smile on your face. He keeps both staff and residents in a good mood. Tom is always on time for his job and does it well. Every holiday he has a new decoration for his walker. We appreciate Tom keeping morale up at the VAF.

July 2014:

Steve M.

Steve has worked very hard on his program and sobriety. There has been several road blocks that have happened to him, but even in the face of adversity he never let himself down. He always has a kind word to say and a smile to share. Recently Steve reached his 1 Year of sobriety. We are very proud of him as he should be of himself.

LAUNDRY UPGRADE AT KING SITE



On May 20th, the King Site VAF received new washers and a dryer. Pictured are residents of the program, R. Beattie, T. Boyer and L. Cavanaugh standing by the new machines. Bet they can't wait for laundry day to give them a spin!

PIECE OF MY HEART

A poem a resident veteran wrote to express some of his feelings.

By Joe S., U.S.M.C.

When one's world is turned upside down,
most veterans I know
have been there I've found.
A Veteran may feel like life is forgotten
without anyone to care.
People all around them, but feelings and
memories they cannot share.

We have to look at ourselves
deep down inside
And remember our Veterans
always there by our side.
Throughout history, Veterans have
protected us day and night.
Like it says in the Bible, They have fought
the good fight.

They have watched over our
kids and our wives,
And in doing so, for some of our Veterans,
this has changed their lives.
Our Veterans have served our country,
making many a sacrifice.
And for some they have paid
the ultimate price.

We have to honor and respect them indeed.
And make sure we are there for them in
their time of need.
Now when they need us,
everyone should take part,
So open your mind to our Veterans
and give them a piece of your heart.

WISH LIST

****We are looking for a 6'x10' Flatbed Trailer; an outside 30' Heavy Duty one piece flagpole and American flag; inside American Flag and stand; Heavy Duty Bike Racks; a Picnic Table****

Personal Care Items:

Toothbrushes/ HOLDERS, Toothpaste, Dental Floss, Toilet Paper, Foot powder, Shampoo, Conditioner, Brushes, Combs, Disposable Shavers, Shaving Cream, Lotion, Bar Soap, Liquid Hand Soap, Baby Oil, Kleenex, Denture-Bath/Cleaner/Adhesive, Deodorant, Vaseline, Bath Towels/Washcloths, Fingernail/Toenail Clippers, Bar Soap Holder/Container, **Body Wash

Laundry Items:

Fabric Softener Sheets, Laundry Bags (mesh type), Sewing Kits, Laundry Detergent (Powder), Plastic Clothes Hangers

Recreational Items:

Model Kits, Craft Kits, Phone Cards, Board Games, Movies, Crossword Puzzles, Pens, Pencils, Envelopes, Stamps, Pool Sticks and Red Chalk, Nine Ball Rack, Pool Stick Repair Kit, Stationery, Books, Greeting Cards, Exercise Mats, Bicycles (26"), Bicycle Tire Repair Kits, 26" Tire Tubes for Bikes, Bicycle Racks

Clothing: *Used clothing, in good condition, is fine.*

House Slippers (Sizes 8-13), T-shirts (S, M, L, XL, 2XL), Tennis Shoes, Underwear (S, M, L, XL, 2XL), Socks – Athletic (Sizes 8-13), Winter Hats – Gloves – Boots – Coats, Men's jeans (Waist sizes 32 to 42)

*****Shower shoes/flip flops (M, L, XL)*****

Household Supplies:

Sugar and/or Sugar Substitute, Coffee mugs (plastic), Pillows, Pillow Protectors

While donations of any kind are always welcome, please call us at 608-372-VETS (8387) before making any donations. Cash donations are always needed and welcomed. As always, the residents and staff thank you for your kind thoughts and generous support.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP?

Providing services takes money; foundations and corporations fight hard for a share of big federal and state grants. The 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:
Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc.
312 Superior Ave.
Tomah, WI 54660

Please help us to continue our efforts to help those veterans who need a "Handup and not a hand-out."

VAF MISSION STATEMENT

To identify and address the issues faced by veterans and low income persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness throughout our communities.

REMEMBER ME

By Christina Rossetti

*Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold
me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.*

*Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.*

*Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve;
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

In Memory of:

Harold C.

U.S. Army

06/24/60 – 06/04/14

Derik M.

U.S. Army

02/16/88 – 07/01/14