



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

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



Winter 2013

SERVING WISCONSIN'S AND THE NATION'S HOMELESS VETERANS FOR OVER 19 YEARS

HELLO AND WELCOME TO 2013!

With the New Year we ushered in the new partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and VAF. The two organizations partnered effective January 1, 2013 to operate the programs and provide services to Veterans located in the Veterans Assistance Programs (VAPs).

The VAPs are comprised of three Grant and Per Diem programs that are owned by WDVA; located in Chippewa Falls, King and Union Grove. These programs include 104 grant and per diem beds and 18 single room occupancy beds, with an additional five VAF staff members and two to three vehicles at each site. We welcome the new staff members to the VAF team. I also want to thank all the VAF staff, new and old, for pitching in together to make this transition a success.

November and December showed just how generous our community and friends are towards those in need. Not only throughout the year, but also especially during the holidays when it's needed the most. The Friends of Veterans held their annual Thanksgiving dinner for the Veterans in

November and Logistics Health Incorporated put on a beautiful Christmas dinner for them in December. Per Mar Security, the 86th Army Training Division and the 88th Regional Support Command Headquarters, just to name a few, conducted donation drives and presented the programs with many donations for the Veterans. Thank you all for your wonderful support, generosity and gifts.



This is only a small snapshot of what has gone on since our last newsletter, as there are many other articles included. I invite you to read further to find out what else has been happening, as we are excited to share our news with you. Take care, be safe and have a truly Happy New Year.

Semper Fidelis,
Colin Moten
VAF President

NEW VAF OFFICE GOES ENERGY EFFICIENT

The VAF new administrative and SSVF offices on Superior Avenue enjoy a clear view and warmer temperatures, after the building's front windows were replaced December 13th. It was a cold day for the installation (thankfully, it was completed before the December "Blizzard" hit on 12/20/12), but with the new, double-paned glass, the building is now much warmer. Kevin, Kurt and helper from Tomah Glass worked diligently and quickly in the cool temperature.

The old glass was removed easily enough, but inserting the new windows took a bit more finesse. Before the new glass could be inserted in the framework, it had to be shaped for a secure fit. The chilly weather and loud tools made for an exciting work environment that day! Our Administrative Assistant, Melanie Kiel (pictured below) took one for the team braving the cold weather and continued working at her desk, despite the cold and noise.

With the new windows squarely in place, the building retains more heat by creating a more energy efficient environment, cuts off the outside noises and shows off a fine view of Tomah's prized Gasoline Alley.

LHI HOLIDAY VETERANS DINNER



LHI's CEO Don Weber and VAF President Colin Moten.

On December 12, 2012, VAF staff members, Colin Moten, Renee Pierce and Melanie Kiel had the pleasure to participate in taking the Veterans in our programs to Logistics Health, Inc. (LHI) Veterans holiday dinner and also to the La Crosse Rotary Lights display.

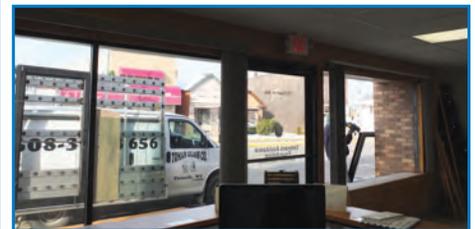
Thanks to the transportation from the

Wilton Bus Service, we left VAF's building on the VA grounds about 4:15 p.m. and headed to La Crosse, Wisconsin. As we arrived in the La Crosse area and we got closer to LHI, you started to see all the holiday lights. Listening to the ooh's and aah's were just the start of the Veteran's reactions about the night's events.

We pulled up to the LHI dining location (The Cargill Room) and the courtyard had holiday lights on the trees. As you walked in the front lobby, there was a beautiful Christmas tree decorated with attention to every detail, with silver and mauve ornament bulbs (the size of a basketball), gold beaded garland, snowflake ornaments, white lace garland and hundreds of white lights. It was an amazing greeting just entering the building.

We then entered the dining hall which had round tables covered with white tablecloths and three-foot, tinsel-like Christmas trees, each a different color (green, red or silver)

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LA CROSSE ROTARY LIGHT SHOW



By Melanie Kiel
VAF Administrative Assistant

After enjoying the wonderful time at the LHI dinner (in a previous article) we then loaded the bus and headed to the La Crosse Rotary Lights. I was sitting in the front of the bus and as we turned into the entrance of the Rotary Lights, I hear multiple Veterans say "WOW".

This was my fourth time this year at the lights, but it was much more touching to hear and see the Veterans' reactions to the lights. Especially the reactions when we entered the tunnel of lights, tuned the radio to the appropriate channel (90.7) and they witnessed the light display



synced to the Christmas music.

As we ended the tour, there was a display of all the military branch symbols, along with a yellow ribbon and the Red Arrow insignia, all done in holiday lights. It was a beautiful sight to see. Brian C. stated, "This far exceeded my expectations. The best light show in my life and I have been many places."

We arrived back in Tomah just before 9:00 p.m. with many tired, but happy individuals. Several of the Veterans said they were "honored", "proud", "had an exceptional time" and "wonderful time, great food, loved the lights."

*The night has ended,
but the memories will last a lifetime!*

PAYING IT FORWARD

The VAF is fortunate enough to have a wonderful volunteer driver that is dependable and always willing to help out our organization in a pinch. I am speaking of Mr. Harold W. Harold is a prior resident of the VAF in Tomah; he has been out in the community on his own for the past year and still remains one of our most valued drivers.

Harold's day of driving can consist of anything from picking up a fellow veteran at the VA and taking them to work in the community, dropping them off at the WTC-Tomah Campus for classes or dropping someone off at a job interview.

We honored Harold for all his volunteering at our Holiday Party on December 18, 2012. Harold was presented with a cer-



tificate of appreciation, a gas card and gift card for Famous Dave's restaurant.

Thank you, Harold, for all of your hard work and dedication. We truly appreciate everything you do for the Veterans Assistance Foundation and the Veterans we serve.

THANKSGIVING FEAST PROVIDED FOR VAF VETERANS

Saturday, November 3rd, was another day to be thankful for the Veterans in residence at the Veterans Assistance Foundation Programs as the Friends of Veterans (FOV) once again provided their annual Thanksgiving Dinner.

About 25 people, FOV members (past and present) as well as FOV family members, arrived at building 407 with all of the fixings for a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner. There were approximately 35 Veterans who participated in the dinner provided by these friendly and helpful people.

These Veterans were able to partake in turkey, ham, stuffing, potatoes, green beans, corn, salads, rolls and a very large selection of desserts. One thing that could definitely be said about the event is that no one should have gone away hungry.

The staff and Veterans are very thankful for the continuing generosity displayed by the members of the Friends of Veterans group.

Vickie Hilliard, FOV President said, "It is always a pleasure to be able to give back to our Veterans. We hope to see you next year."

CONGRATULATIONS, HERBERT!



The Veteran Assistance Foundation is very pleased to announce resident Herbert G. as the first recipient of the "Graduation Package" from the 407 (Tomah) program, and the second resident to have received this Package since its implementation. The package includes many essential items for a new start in one's own home, such as dishes, pots and pans, a toaster, a coffeepot, casserole dishes and some cleaning supplies. The package provides the basics Veterans will need when they move out on their own.

The VAF developed the requirements for the Graduation Package over the last two years. We started with a curriculum entitled "Rent Smart", a series of 11 classes covering topics necessary for a successful tenant experience. Following that, requirements for budget counseling and good discharge planning were also necessary prior to receiving the Graduation Package.

Coinciding with the required courses, the resident must also have been compliant with the program, meeting our program requirements and their own goals in every area, without experiencing a substance abuse relapse.

Herbert G. completed all the requirements for the package before he successfully discharged from the 407 program and transitioned into his own apartment.

AFTERGLOW

By A Grateful Vet

Morning afters are usually thought of in a very different way; however, the day after the annual Christmas party in Tomah/VAF we are still thinking of the enjoyment had by all in attendance.

B/P Smokehouse & BBQ put on a wonderful meal for our veterans, with all the great picnic-style fixins: beef brisket, chicken, coleslaw and BBQ beans.

We were visited by the local AMVETS who helped with goodies of all types and Bingo for all. If you walked away without at least one prize, then you did not try very hard.

All the veterans were treated to some gifts and a good time was had by all!!!

CHRISTMAS AT VAF



Top left: VAF staff Dawn Ollendick and Melanie Kiel, along with resident Darren P. serving the delicious meal. Top right: Tomah VA staff with Kate Loethen manning the Bingo table. Bottom left: a resident chooses one of many presents. Bottom right: Anna Starego, Charles Roth and Wayne Rudolph, members from two AMVETS Posts in the area, joined us.



Once again, the holiday of sharing came to VAF as staff gathered to host the annual Christmas party for the Veterans within the program. Every year, staff gathers together on their own time with joy and kindness in their hearts and a zealous need to share that joy with each other and the Veterans.

This year there was a big turnout; several Veterans from the Step Up houses in Tomah and Madison and a few from the Veterans Assistance Program at Fort McCoy joined in the festivities and helped bring joy to one another. The evening began with a succulent array of catered food provided by BP Smoke House. Everyone sat down as one big family to dine to their hearts' content.

Once everyone had eaten enough, the evening moved on to presents donated by different groups for the veterans. After receiving their gifts, the veterans could play Bingo and listen to sounds of holiday music, all the while basking in their thoughts of holiday fun and winning. The Bingo games were extra special this year as we had Charles Roth, Wayne Rudolph and Anna Starego from AMVETS Post 2051/2180 join us for the festivities. They provided presents, cash prizes for Bingo and also cake and ice cream.

All in all, a spirit of giving is always best. Thank you to all who made this event possible with their generous donations and assistance.

MIRACLE IN THE MANGER

*By Dawn Ollendick
VAF Program Director*

Miracle in the Manger was the theme of the play that St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Shennington, Wisconsin put on this holiday season. This was the second year that they have invited our veterans to attend and watch the rehearsal of this holiday play that the Sunday school children put on.

On December 15, 2012, nine VAF resident Veterans attended the rehearsal and each one enjoyed the presentation very much. After the show, the veterans helped decorate holiday cookies and then ate pizza with the kids. The kids got a chance to ask questions of our veterans and get to know them better. This has been something that has become very special to the veterans and they enjoy attending.

The parish collected several items for the Veterans in the program, which was much appreciated.

We would like to thank Nicole from St. Peter's for thinking of us again and inviting us to attend such a wonderful event.



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on all of the tables. As we walked into the room there were three ladies asking to take your coat and hang it up for you.

As everyone sat down, each person was given individual attention, from getting their soda and/or water to having a second serving of dinner, dessert or asked if they wanted a meal to go. LHI CEO, Mr. Don Weber visited every table and said thank you to the Veterans for coming. As resident James H. summed it up best, "They treated us like royalty! It was wonderful and the food was great!"

One of the other highlights of the dinner was when Mr. Weber gave his speech. He emphasized how honored and appreciative he was of their service and sacrifices. Mr. Weber spoke of how his father was a POW in WWII and his mother did not know his father was a POW until six months after

being notified he was MIA. His mother kept 127 letters written to her from his father while serving in WWII. He ended with thanking the Veterans for their service to this country. "Mr. Weber was genuine and heartwarming to remember us like that," said resident Bryant H.

At the conclusion of the dinner, Mr. Weber announced that LHI was giving each Veteran in attendance a sweatshirt or T-shirt, socks and a gift card as they departed. Jeffery E. commented on Mr. Weber's speech, saying, "Very grateful for everything, the owner (Mr. Weber), who gave recognition for what every Veteran deserves." John W. also said, "It's not the food or the gifts; it was Mr. Weber's speech for our respect for our country."

*The night has ended,
but the memories will last a lifetime!*



WISH LIST

Personal Care Items:

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

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

Our mission is to help homeless veterans or at risk of becoming Homeless veterans regain, maintain and improve their status in society by providing an alcohol and drug-free, secure environment through which a wide array of human services can be accessed in an atmosphere of dignity and mutual concern.

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
David C.
U.S. Army
04/13/58 – 11/29/12**

**Billy C.
U.S. Marines
09/21/49 – 11/27/12**