



# VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION THE ALLIANCE

VAF, P.O. Box 610, Tomah, WI 54660 608-372-1280 [www.veteransassistance.org](http://www.veteransassistance.org)

Spring 2009

VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

## 10 YEARS OF DEDICATION TO VAF

By Faye Rainey  
Operations Director, VAF Tomah

Wow, how time flies when you're having fun, working hard, helping people, caring about those people and crying over losing those people. I have been able to move up in the foundation, carried four different positions and have occupied six different offices in that time. I love my job and have been at it now for 10 years on April 19th.

Out of college and the Army, I never quite knew what I was in for when I put in for the position of Case Manager at the VAF in Tomah. Believe you me when I say this job is NOT for everyone. You have to have the heart and desire to help, even the ones who don't know that they want it yet. In the beginning I never knew that I could feel like a mother to a man or woman that was

possibly twice my age, but after countless residents coming through the program over the years and being thanked for just providing them with basic help, it keeps me going and thankful every day to be able to come to work and be able to do something that makes a difference. I still get visits from some of my first residents and enjoy the updates, good or bad. I think we have a great staff and would like to say I hope I am writing a similar letter at 20 years.



*Congratulations to Faye for all her hard work and dedication to the Veterans Assistance Foundation. She does more than provide "basic help" for veterans. As a fellow veteran, she is an advocate and is always finding ways to make the program better by developing an excellent rapport with the residents, supportive service provider*

*and other professional organizations. She has been an outstanding employee through the years, as she has made her way up the VAF ladder. We applaud her for all her accomplishments and efforts. We are very fortunate to have her here at VAF.*

Robert Piaro, President

## V.A.F. WELCOMES TWO NEW CASE MANAGERS TO STAFF



My name is Tom Kunz, and I am a new Case Manager for the Veterans Assistance Foundation in Tomah. I would like to say that I am very pleased and excited to be involved with an organization that is having a positive impact on people's lives.

I was born and raised in Eau Claire, WI. After my time in the Army, I returned to Eau Claire where I received my undergraduate degree from UW-Eau Claire in Management and went on to complete my MBA from Pepperdine University while living in California. I am currently living in La Crosse, and in my spare time I enjoy fishing, wood-working and building and flying radio-control airplanes.

As a fellow veteran myself, it is truly rewarding to be able to assist those that have served our country. I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experience while providing value to the organization. I feel extremely proud to be working with such a dedicated staff assisting in making people's lives better.

*Tom has been here a short time, but in that time he has shown that he is motivated to learn the position and anxious to help all he can. We are very pleased that Tom has joined our team. Good luck, Tom – you're doing a great job!*

Robert Piaro, President



Chris Heitman is a Veterans Assistance Foundation employee, who was assigned in March as a Case Manager for the homeless veteran program here in Tomah. In this role, she provides information to veterans about how to get pensions and social security, driver's licenses, employment and housing.

Prior to working at V.A.F., Chris worked as a placement professional for Riverfront Inc., an employment service working with people with barriers to employment. Chris also has her master's degree in Counseling and is working toward a licensure in Substance Abuse through Viterbo University in LaCrosse.

*Chris has jumped right into the case manager position and shows daily how much she is enjoying helping the veterans. She is so dedicated, that we have to "shoo" her out at the end of the day, as we believe she would stay 24/7 if allowed to. Chris, thank you for bringing all of your knowledge and devotion to the table. Keep up the good work and we're glad you're part of the VAF team!*

Robert Piaro, President

## HVRP UPDATE

**By Colin Moten**  
**VAF Program Developer**

It is just past the 3rd quarter mark (FY08) and 7th quarter mark (FY07) with the HVRP program. This year, we have focused on establishing relationships with local businesses for OJT or employment placement opportunities. We have been successful with two local businesses, and will strive to build additional networking bridges in the upcoming months.

The program has been providing

employment training classes on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and holding a special evening session to have the veterans meet with a credit counselor. This provides the veterans an opportunity to look at credit reports, budgeting, money management and spending habits.

In the 3rd quarter, we tried something different and had a motivational speaker come and speak with the veterans. The guest speaker spoke with the veterans about self worth, purpose, motivation and determination. This was a great segue for the veterans into spring

2009 and inspired most to consider going back to school or finding employment.

We have purchased employment resources for the veterans to assist in finding employment during these tough economic times. There are many veterans in the program that have a college education, up to a master's degree, that find themselves limited in employment opportunities. These resources purchased by HVRP provide creative insight into the best careers with a two-year degree, best careers with no college education and recession-proof jobs.

## TO MY DEAR FRIENDS, MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF ALL AGES, RACE AND CREED:

It has been my goal for many years now to help with the disease called cancer by collecting the tops from cans. This is my ongoing goal: to collect as many as I can, as often as I can, for the research of this disease. I became a homeless veteran after the death of my father, which led me to total alcohol addiction in which I have sought help for from the VAF here at the Tomah VA.

I wanted to pay back the community for my help, as well as the VAF and the Probation Department for giving

me another start in life, in which I am doing quite well. I am committed to doing all I can and more to help the Ronald McDonald House and others to get this disease under control. It is my continuing effort and commitment to continue this for the people, as well as for self-help in the rebuilding of my life.

Thank you for your support and help.

**Steven M. Bates**  
**VAF Tomah**



*Steve pictured here along with his buddy, Ronald McDonald.*

## WHAT TALENTED PEOPLE WE HAVE!



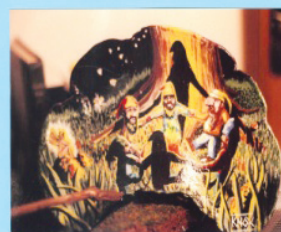
**VAF resident, Walter Knox and Miss Wisconsin, Brianna Lipor.**

On February 19, Miss Wisconsin, Brianna Lipor, presented awards to veterans at the Tomah VA. The veterans involved in entering artwork into this yearly National Creative Arts Festival included Walter Knox, whom you may remember as our featured veteran in the last newsletter. Walter entered an acrylic painting entitled "Damaged." He was awarded 1st Place.

The acrylic painting with the dreamcatcher was a statement about how native American culture has been commercialized. The name of the painting is "Damaged" and got 1st Place in the painting category. The other two took 2nd Place in two different categories. "Two Travelers" in acrylic, grease pencil and charcoal in the mixed media category and "Who Wooda Think It" in mushroom, rotted wood with moss in the assemblage category.

The 1st Place winner's pieces will continue on in the competition. The final stop will be held this year in San Antonio, Texas.

Keep up the good work, Walt, and good luck.

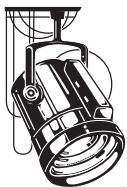


TWO SECOND PLACE WINNERS —  
"TWO TRAVELERS" & "WHO WOODA THINK IT?"



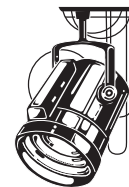
1ST PLACE, PAINTING  
CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL  
VAF TOMAH, WI 2009  
"DAMAGED"





## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*Recognizing those who have made special contributions to the veterans residing in VAF-operated programs in Wisconsin.*



### ELKS LODGE AND HOLIDAY INN

Through a joint effort between the Holiday Inn of Eau Claire and the Elks 402 of Eau Claire, a large donation of pillows, blankets and comforters were delivered to the Veterans Assistance Foundation here at Tomah. Residents Dennis H. and Mark C. helped unload the truck, while Elk member Charles “Charlie” Nothan and VAMC Volunteer Services/Public Relations Officer, Laura Bishop, were overseeing and assisting with the special delivery. This is the first donation that the VAF has received that was coordinated by the Elks. They have donated to the Tomah VA on previous occasions, and since the VA could not use the donated items at this time, VAF was contacted by Laura Bishop to see if we were interested and in need of the bedding donation.

The Elks have been very good to the VA, financially supporting the follow-



ing programs: VA Golf Course, “Veterans Express ThemSelves” (VETS) art program, monthly Bingo games, picnics, newspaper/magazine subscriptions, artwork, housing for Re-Creation when needed, Thanksgiving dinner for veterans, popcorn supplies and Christmas activities and recreational outings with the veterans. Many Elks lodges also supply the vets with wonderful in-kind dona-

tions, such as leather for crafts, clothing and personal care items, etc.

VAF extends A BIG thank you to the Eau Claire Holiday Inn for their generous donation of the bedding and the Elks 402 of Eau Claire for their assistance with the coordination and the delivery of the items. Our residents also thank you. The luxury of having hotel bedding to sleep on is a real treat for them!

### Step by Step to a New Beginning

*By Lorri McLaughlin  
Former VAF Resident*



When I got released from being incarcerated for eight years, I became homeless. That is when I came to the Veterans Assistance Foundation to get my life back together. While I was in the program, I started my medical coding and billing course online, and my studies were going well.

In December 2007, I put in for my

### HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN

service-connected disability. I was able to get surgery that I needed for my right foot. Also, I volunteered for Chaplain Maynard at the VA Tomah, doing different projects for him.

Since being released from the program I have gotten a one-bedroom apartment, work part-time and volunteer at the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. I was referred to Racine Vocational Ministry from the Transitional Living Center in Burlington. I developed a plan with the assistance of the Racine Vocational Ministry.

First of all, I needed to get well; then move step-by-step towards long-term success. I was eager. By the second meeting, I was motivated to set some short-term goals, which I usually accomplished by the next appointment. I pursued opportunities to care for my emotional health. I recounted each success to my parole agent.

I began to fly!! On August 26, 2008, I

was granted my service-connected disability. On October 4, 2008, I received the Rising Star Award from Racine Vocational Ministry for the hard work that I did to get my apartment, a part-time job and volunteering at the Chamber of Commerce. I received a stellar 90-day employment review. I was still working on getting the medical coding and billing course done.

I was able to celebrate Christmas with my oldest daughter, Amy, from Orlando, Florida this year in my own apartment. I am also volunteering at the Transitional Living Center for ladies and children. The ladies say that I am their role model. I hope to soon be going back into Ellsworth Correctional Center for prison ministry to give back and to encourage the ladies.

I would like to thank the staff of the Veterans Assistance Foundation for their continued support.

## WISH LIST

### Personal Care Items:

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

### Laundry Items:

Fabric Softener Sheets	Laundry bags (mesh type)	Sewing Kits
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### Recreational Items:

Model Kits	Phone Cards	Pool Sticks and Chalk (red)
Craft Kits	Movies	Pool Stick Repair Kit
Board Games	Crossword Puzzles	Nine Ball Rack
Pens, pencils	Envelopes	Stamps
Stationery	Greeting Cards	Exercise Mats

### Clothing: Good used clothing is fine.

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

### Household Supplies:

Sugar/Sugar Substitute	Coffee mugs (plastic)	Snack foods/Baked goods
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While donations of any kind are always welcome, please call the Center at 608-372-1280 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.**  
P.O. Box 610  
Tomah, WI 54660

*Please help us to continue our efforts to help those veterans who need a "Hand-up 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.*

## NEW RIDES FOR OUR VETERANS

Two new 2009 Dodge Grand Caravan vans were purchased for our program from the Department of Veterans Affairs through their Homeless Providers, a Grant and Per Diem Program Capital Grants.

These vans will be used by our veterans to travel to medical appointments, be trans-

ported to their jobs and also other program activities, like weekly runs to Walmart.

Vans are driven by specified resident drivers; only those with good driving records and that are approved by VAF's insurers and staff are authorized to transport program residents.



### VAF DECEASED PROGRAM RESIDENTS

S. Colby	09/19/48 – 09/29/06
N. Smith	09/30/55 – 08/31/08
W. Peterson	11/07/48 – 09/11/08
J. Blanco	04/27/47 – 11/03/08
S. Walker	01/24/59 – 12/14/08
J. Drinkwine	03/15/53 – 12/23/08
D. Sprague	02/27/60 – 12/29/08
S. Lenss	10/22/53 – 02/06/09

### *His Journey's Just Begun*

*Don't think of him as gone away,  
his journey's just begun;  
Life holds so many facets,  
this earth is only one.*

*Just think of him as resting  
from the sorrows and the tears;  
in a place of warmth and comfort  
where there are no days and years.*

*Think how he must be wishing  
that we could know today;  
how nothing but our sadness  
can really pass away.*

*And think of him as living  
in the hearts of those he touched...  
for nothing loved is ever lost  
and he was loved so much.*

– E. Brenneman