



# VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION THE ALLIANCE

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

Fall 2010

SERVING WISCONSIN'S AND THE NATION'S HOMELESS VETERANS FOR OVER 15 YEARS

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello, everyone. It's getting to that time of the year again, and the weather in Wisconsin has definitely switched to fall – almost overnight. This past quarter has really been a busy one. Back in August, the Tomah VA hosted their 24th Annual Platoon Run that included a vintage car and bike show; we even had one of our own as a judge for the event.

Since we've had the classroom fixed up, we have been able to host several functions, including: meetings for the annual Stand Down, Monroe County Homeless Coalition Meeting in August, and the CHALENG meeting that was held in September. We have even started a movie night on the weekends that incorporates our PowerPoint equipment.

Throughout the summer, VAF staff have attended Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Job Fairs and Supermarkets in King, Madison and Fort McCoy. Good job, guys! We've heard many wonderful compliments – keep up the good work. The staff was able to attend a "Get Motivated" seminar that was held in Milwaukee and featured some very prominent guest speakers.

We have finally finished our Step-Up food distribution project, remodeling a garage at one of our program houses. This will allow us to save money, time and consolidate our resources in the Step-Up program by supplying and maintaining one food distribution point. We'll have more on this in the next newsletter.

On another note, as we move into the holiday season, many of our thoughts are focused on the spirit of giving. I know that things are tight with the economy and jobs are not as secure as they used to be, but we will continue to provide for our brother and sister veterans that are in need. This is made possible by the generous donations and goodwill of our supporters. If you get a chance, please stop by...your company will be welcome. Take care and be safe.

Semper fidelis,  
**Colin Moten, President**

## GET OUT AND HAVE SOME FUN



**Greg B., 1st Place, 1 Mile Run**



**Steve A., 4th Place, 5K Run**



**Marty F., 5th Place, 5K Run**

*By George, VAF Roving Reporter*

Although having fun is not our number one priority at the Veterans Assistance Foundation, there are many things to do to relax, laugh, have fun and get out of ourselves while we take care of serious business. Some of the activities are Bingo, blackjack, dog races, arts and crafts, ice cream socials and more. Managing time and scheduling social functions is a great way to develop social habits for after leaving the program and to relieve anxiety and tension.

During the last month, many of the residents got out and had a good time; for example, the Labor Day cookout provided by the staff was an enormous success. The hamburgers and bratwurst cooked by Don were cooked to perfection. These were surrounded by a variety of chips, dips, fruits, ice cream and cookies. Everyone pigged out and became

*Joseph B., waiting for his turn to ride the horses.*



*Waiting for the start of the parade.*

*FUN, continued on page 4*

## THE NATIONAL CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL



**Tomah VAMC Director Jerry Molnar, Steve H. and Jean Calhoun.**

The National Creative Arts Festival was held at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin on October 24, 2010. The Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center was the host for this year's event and

everything was a great success. While there were many local award recipients (28 Performing Arts and 25 Visual Arts), only six won nationally, of which five of them were invited to the festival. Nationally, over 3,000 Veterans participated in the program and 140 of them were selected to attend the festival based on their medal and the stage show process.

One of the five local participants invited to attend the festival is a prior resident of the VAF. Steve H. attended and performed as he had received a bronze medal in music. Of those talented Veterans receiving one or more of the awards

*ARTS, continued on page 4*



## 2010 PLATOON RUN VAMC



August 22, 2010 was the date for the 24th Annual VAMC Platoon Run. It was a beautiful day as the show cars, trucks and motorcycles rolled in to show their support and appreciation for our United States Veterans.

If you wanted to have a flash from the past, this was the place to be. Muscle cars, antiques, classics and our beloved Harley-Davidson motorcycles were all available for your viewing pleasure.

Speaking with one of the judges of the show, Joseph B. (a Veteran and resident of the VAF) said, "Being a judge for such an honorable show was very difficult, there was just so much to choose from." His favorite was the 1963 Blue Chevy Nova, which received the award for Best Car. Among his other favorites

were a 50s Roadster and a beautiful Harley-Davidson Indian that the owner had memorialized for his two daughters that had passed away.

All in all, the day was a phenomenal success!

## NEW VAF ROVING REPORTER



Introducing George, the Veterans Assistance Foundation's roving reporter. George, a veteran in our program, is helping out with articles for the

newsletter. He is covering events that we, the staff, would generally not be able to attend or report on firsthand.

We would like to extend a big THANK YOU to George for all of his help, as we would not be able to cover all of the events that our Veterans participate in.

## MONROE COUNTY HOUSING COALITION

The Monroe County Housing Coalition is a group of concerned citizens and professionals meeting since May 2006 to address Monroe County housing issues and needs. The purpose of the Coalition is to increase accessibility and affordability of safe, healthy and secure housing for all Monroe County citizens. Their current objectives are to:

1. Identify, prioritize and address housing gaps
2. Engage policymakers in addressing Monroe County housing needs
3. Create community awareness of housing issues through presentations and media

The group is focusing on collaboration with other coalitions, conducting community surveys, facilitation and organization of workshops and classes, gathering statistics and information, and seeking funding for homeless families.

On August 25th, the Coalition had their quarterly meeting, hosted by the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) and the



VAMC Tomah. The VA provided a variety of information regarding the resources that they have available for homeless veterans.

Sheila Johnson discussed the Hud-Vash program and The

Center for Minority Veterans. Cindi Groskreutz and Danielle Olson discussed the services that the VA has to offer, including the Homeless hotline at 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838) and the VA's connection to the Veterans Assistance Foundation and the Homeless Veterans Program at Fort McCoy.

Danielle discussed the CHALENG meeting that was on September 8th at the VAF and hosted by the VAMC in Tomah and what the purpose of the meeting was. She was also able to have the Coalition complete surveys that contain essential data needed by the VA. The sub-committees gave their reports and the next meeting is set for October 27th.

Thank you to the VA for supplying the coffee and food for the meeting. For more information on the Coalition, go to [www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/monroe/HousingCoalition.html](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/monroe/HousingCoalition.html)

## SUPERMARKET OF VETERANS BENEFITS AND JOB FAIRS

Vern Tranberg, Case Manager in the Employment and Training Section for the VAF, has been busy during the month of September.

On September 2nd he attended the Supermarket of Veterans Benefits at the King Veterans Home. The Supermarket was held in the Marden Center from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. He spoke to approximately 30 Veterans, most of whom didn't require our services, but said they would pass on our information to anyone they heard may need them. He was able to assist a WWII Veteran in signing up for the Honor Flight program going to Washington, D.C. and he met a former resident of the VAF program.

Edgewood College in Madison was the site for a job fair on September 9th. They set up in two rooms with all of the Veteran providers grouped together in one room. Vern said this was an advantage when it came to referring the Veteran to the next provider they needed or wanted to see. He was able to meet and speak to other providers, which resulted in several new contacts for the VAF to use in assisting our Veterans.

On September 10th, Fort McCoy hosted a Supermarket of Veterans Benefits in conjunction with their Retiree Appreciation Day. They had 51 tables set up with organizations there to assist Veterans. Over 100 Veterans stopped to speak to Vern and inquire as to

what type of assistance the VAF provides. Most said they had heard of the VAF, but didn't know what services were provided through our program. The event was a valuable resource in getting information out to the Veterans about our program, as well as making contact with other providers.

Some of the other providers who attended the Supermarket included:

Local County Veterans Service Officers, Western Technical College, Gold Star Mothers, American Legion Posts, AMVETS, Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts, Disabled American Veterans, State Legislators, Military Affairs, Milwaukee VA Regional Office Claims Representative, Tomah VAMC and Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, just to name a few. Veterans attending could learn about funeral honors and cemeteries; awards, medals and records; Social Security Benefits and Veterans Homes, along with many other services.



**Vern Tranberg, VAF  
Case Manager**

## HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



My name is Bob Jeffries. I am a former resident of the Veterans Assistance Foundation (September 20, 2007 to December 30, 2008).

I feel this is the right time to let you and the Foundation know how truly grateful I am for the opportunity you afforded me in being a resident for that 1-1/2 years.

You provided me excellent guidance, support, understanding and encouragement. Your very well-structured program taught me acceptance and humility. I formed a positive attitude, a realization and the opening of my eyes to spirituality.

You appointed me the first house manager for your Step-Up program expansion to the property on Donna Avenue in Tomah, Wisconsin.

That small decision gave me pure inspiration. Hope into faith. I became responsible and accountable for my actions and the choices I made. It also taught me to trust a little at a time, and in turn, raised my self-esteem.

You supplied me with that knowledge. I've been clean and sober now for a little over three years, and I am continuing outpatient therapy and PTSD meetings on a weekly basis. Knowledge is becoming wisdom. This wisdom is forming a solid foundation for my new life. The meetings show my higher power is with me. I will only grow one day at a time for this Marine.

Thanks, once again. You are in my thoughts and prayers every day.

## WHEN I MUST LEAVE YOU

By Helen Steiner Rice

When I must leave you for a little while  
Please do not grieve and shed wild tears  
And hug your sorrow to you through the years,  
But start out bravely with a gallant smile;

And for my sake and in my name  
Live on and do all things the same,  
Feed not your loneliness on empty days,  
But fill each waking hour in useful ways;

Reach out your hand in comfort and cheer  
And I, in turn, will comfort you and hold you near;  
And never, never be afraid to die,  
For I am waiting for you in the sky.

**In Memory:**  
**James H. – USMC**  
**Age 64 years**  
**11/15/45 – 08/08/10**

**Gary K. – USMC**  
**Age 48 years**  
**11/20/61 – 10/02/10**



# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## KATE LOETHEN, GPD LIAISON/CASE MANAGER



Kate Loethen, GPD Case Manager, has been employed by the VA for 21 years. Her qualifications include licensed professional counselor and certified rehabilitation counselor. The following are the positions she has held: VAMC-Tomah Coordinator Vocational Rehab Residential Unit; Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor serving outpatients, homeless veterans and residents for the PTSD, Substance Abuse and Dual Diagnosis treatment programs; GPD Liaison; and GPD case manager, serving homeless veterans in the Veterans Assistance Foundation program.

Kate has coordinated services with the VAF staff for the last 16 years, initially providing vocational rehabilitation services, then GPD liaison and case management services. She enjoys meeting new

people and helps them identify and understand their strengths, abilities and talents, that can also lead them to make positive changes in their lives, especially to improve their economic status.

She brings energy and a fresh perspective to the challenges that veterans face, as well as gives them an awareness of the courage and commitment needed to make changes in one's life. In other words "walk the talk."

Kate says, "I appreciate having the opportunity to serve and relate to veterans in need, knowing that my assistance has made a significant difference in their lives."

*Veterans struggling with homelessness show strength and resourcefulness, and given the right opportunities, can improve the quality of their lives and be a source of inspiration to others.* – Kate Loethen

## GARAGE RENOVATION

That's right – Coming soon to a house near you, the newly renovated food co-op for the Veterans of the Step-Up Houses. On September 27th, we had a company come in to renovate the garage at the Veterans Street property. By tearing out the old and bringing in the new, we will turn this property into a one-stop shopping location for the Veterans residing in the four Step-Up houses located in Tomah.

They started with the rewiring of the structure to bring it up to code. Then a few changes were made to the original plan as we waited to start the construction. The

biggest one was regarding the heater and air conditioner. As the contractor thought about the one he originally quoted us, he decided to come back and quote us on a better, more efficient one that will shut off during cycles.

The other change made to the plan was the doors that will temporary replace the overhead double garage door. The new door will be a double swing door that will enable us to move larger items in and out of the garage. This will streamline the shopping process and make everything more efficient for both the Veterans and the staff of VAF.

## CHALENG MEETING

On Wednesday, September 8, 2010 the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) classroom was the site of the CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment Local Education Networking Group) Meeting hosted by the Tomah VAMC. Danielle



Olson, Tomah VAMC Grand & Per Diem (GPD) Liaison, oversaw the meeting as well as presenting on two topics.

The meeting was from 8:00 a.m. to 12 Noon

with speakers presenting the following topics: Federal Women's Program by Clelia Taylor; Suicide Prevention by Garry Hebel; Minority Veteran's Programs and HUD/VASH program by Sheila Johnson; and Contract Housing and GPD Programs by Danielle Olson.

Those attending the meeting learned about the different services the VAMC provides for Veterans through each of these programs. These meetings are always informative on VAMC services, as well as a great opportunity to network with other providers and be able to assist the Veterans to the greatest extent possible. Attendees learn of current programs, as well as programs that will soon be implemented.



## 2010 WISH LIST

### Personal Care Items:

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

### 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	Exercise Mats
Stationery	Books	26" Bike Tire Tubes
Stamps	Bicycle Rack	Bicycle Tire Repair Kits
Greeting Cards	Bicycles (26")	

### 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)	Pillows & Pillow Protectors
Bath Towels/Wash Cloths	Clothes Hangers (plastic)	Laundry Detergent (powder)
Fabric Softener Sheets	Sewing Kits	Laundry Bags (mesh type)

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.

### FUN, continued from page 1

heavy-eyed and ready for a nap.

Residents showed their support for our troops by participating in the 3rd Annual Freedom Run for returning OIF/OEF soldiers. The event held a 5-kilometer run (Steve, 4th place and Marty, 5th place) and a 1-mile fun run (Greg, 1st place).

Horses for Heroes, established by North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, Inc. (NARHA) came out to show their horses. Joseph B., a resident and paraplegic, is galloping his way through vocational rehabilitation to learn to ride a horse. He is being taught to saddle up, mount and ride his horse with little assistance using modified equipment. Some of his hopes are to make improvements in flexibility, balance and strength. He looks forward to the recreational activities it will allow him to do outdoors. He said it will "increase his sense of independence, confidence, patience and self-esteem."

Residents also enjoyed the celebration and festive activities of the Wo-Zha-Wa Days (an annual celebration of autumn) in the Wisconsin Dells. Showing support for our troops, the group participated in and rode amphibious vehicles (The Original Ducks) leading a 75-unit parade. The parade had a great turnout, almost 10,000 spectators showed up for the event. Afterwards, the group went on a tour of the scenic lower Dells on a river ride. The participants from the VAF were: Otha H., Marty F., Joseph M., Bill G., Greg B., George G., Nick C., Albert W., Mike C. and John D.

Get out and have some fun. It helps to add a new perspective to life.

### ARTS, continued from page 1

in either Performing Arts or Visual Arts, several are current or prior residents of the VAF.

The following is a list of award recipients of current or prior VAF residents, as provided by the Tomah VAMC:

#### Vocal Music:

Category #2	Vocal Solo Pop	Steve H.
Category #5	Vocal Solo Broadway	Steve H.
Category #6	Vocal Solo Rock	Derek E.
Category #7	Vocal Solo Comedy	Steve H.
Category #20	Vocal Group Religious	Redeemed (Member: John D.)

#### Instrumental Music:

Category #28	Solo Jazz/Rhythm & Blues	Matt N.
Category #29	Solo Classical	Matt N.
Category #37	Solo Original	Matt N.

#### Creative Writing:

Category #1	Poetry-Humorous	Scott F.
Category #4	Poetry-Other	Scott S.
Category #7	Essay-Patriotic	Scott F.

#### Drama:

Category #7	Comedy	Scott F.
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#### Visual Arts:

Acrylic Painting and Fine Art-Mixed Media	Walt K.
Monochromatic Drawing	Scott S.
Monochromatic Drawing	Reggie L.

#### Glazed Ceramics, Transfer/Engraving Kits, Wood building Kits:

Theo L.