



VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

THE ALLIANCE

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

Summer 2013

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

FRIENDS OF VETERANS FUNDRAISER

On July 11, 2013, Friends of Veterans-Tomah (FOV) president, Vickie Hilliard and several members, presented a donation to Colin Moten, President of the Veterans Assistance Foundation for \$5,206 from the 11th Annual Bike Blessing/ Poker Run held in May. The donation will be used to help purchase Vans that transport Veterans to and from appointments and other travel needs. This year at the Bike Blessing there were 60 riders that received a blessing as they passed by the VAMC Chaplain and started the Poker Run. This is an annual event and we are pleased to announce several new members have joined us. We look forward to the fundraiser and although it is a lot of work its rewards are huge. FOV members are a devoted group of volunteers with a desire to help our fellow Vets.

FOV members would like to thank all of Tomah and surrounding businesses for the great donations for the Bike Blessing/Poker Run. Each year the members go out and ask for these donations. The members come

back with a huge amount of items, motel rooms, gift certificates, water park passes and much more. We raffle off these items at the fundraiser. The proceeds then go to Veterans Assistance Foundation, whom in turn uses the proceeds to help homeless or at risk of homeless Veterans. Without these donations this fundraiser would not happen. Again we express our deepest THANKS.

This article was contributed by the Friends of Veterans.



GREEN BAY PACKER OUTREACH

The Green Bay Packers Community Outreach Department contacted the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) in May 2013. The Community Outreach Department supports/commits to multiple different events such as: Fit for Kids, Play 60 Challenge, Hometown Huddle, and through various donations to non-profit organizations throughout the year. This year VAF was a selected recipient for their generosity.

At the end of June a large delivery arrived at VAF Administrative Offices. The staff was thrilled to find out what was delivered to us for the Veterans. It was like Christmas in July; there were shoes, towels, t-shirts (long sleeve, short sleeve, in all different sizes), sweatshirts, jackets, lightweight jackets and socks.

The box that drew the most shocking responses was one containing winter hats. It was a long box organized numerically with the players' numbers embroidered on them. Yes, even the "Holy Grail" of past and present player numbers was included.

The best part of receiving these items was when the Veterans were informed of the donation. They were all awestruck, astonished and proud with all the items that were donated just for them. They all selected items and wore them proudly. We even had some non-Packer fans donning the "Green and Gold". One non-Packer fan said, "I am truly in amazement by their generosity to their fans."

The group picture has our Veterans showing how honored they are wearing the Green Bay Packers gear. It was truly awesome. The Veterans will be talking about this every time they put on the item or when someone asks them about it. Donations like this from the Green Bay Packers Community Outreach Department are not just about the items that are donated, it's about making a difference in someone's day. *Thank You Community Outreach Department for your generous donation to our Veterans.*



WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!!

The Veterans Assistance Foundation is currently in need of new refrigerators (3) and small chest freezers (2) to replace the aging units we are currently using for the Veterans in our 60-bed Grant and Per Diem Program. The refrigerators that we are currently using are several years old and are starting to show wear and tear as well as having some maintenance issues. We would like to replace them with newer, more energy efficient models. If you or someone you know are interested in donating any of these items or money towards the purchase of these items, please contact Program Director Faye Rainey by phone at (608) 372-1280.

VAF RECEIVES SSVF 2013 GRANT RENEWAL

Thursday, July 11, 2013 the Department of Veteran Affairs announced the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grant competition awardees for the fiscal year 2014. Following this announcement, the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) is honored to announce that we have been awarded \$607,000 to expand and continue providing supportive services to veterans. This will be the second year of VAF providing services through the SSVF grant.

VAF commenced operating the SSVF program October 1, 2012. Since its inception, the SSVF program has assisted struggling veterans with housing accommodations and those in need of immediate shelter. The renewed funding allows VAF to extend such services to twenty additional counties
— GRANT, continued on page 2

IHG HOTEL DONATION



Mid-May 2013 brought tremendous reward for the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF). Mr. Mike Bayerl, Hotel Manager at IHG Hotel on Fort McCoy, offered a massive and remarkable donation of items. All of Wednesday, May 15th, was spent retrieving bed sheets, blankets, soap bars, chairs, and a plethora of other items. A small collection of hardy and hale volunteers assisted VAF Staff Members Greg Hammer and Bridget Peterson in transporting items from Fort McCoy and storing them at VAF facilities.

Aided by several Veterans in the Tomah program, and a 26-foot U-Haul, VAF staff was able to move the entire donation in one day. The donation itself comes from a change in management at the Fort McCoy Army hotel. With storage stuffed to bursting and new materials arriving, Mr. Bayerl was eager to remove the items and free up some space.

VAF was more than happy to oblige and made quick work of clearing out the donated items.

The arrangement was made earlier in the month when Ms. Peterson visited the hotel to take an initial stock of available objects and materials. Despite Mr. Bayerl's insistence, one could not fully appreciate the sheer quantity of items until seeing it. Three large storage rooms were packed with boxes, laundry trolleys, and racks of bed sheets, pillows, comforters, soap bars, cleaning supplies, and an assortment of other materials.

The donation is a fantastic boon for VAF residents and staff. The supplies will be of great use for both the immediate needs of VAF program residents and as outreach materials for VAF attended events. *The Veterans Assistance Foundation wishes to express its sincerest gratitude for Mr. Bayerl's donation, the aforementioned resident volunteers, and staff accommodations.*

TOMAH CITY CLEANUP

On April 26th the Tomah chief of police, Wes Revels organized a Cleanup Tomah group. The Veterans Assistance Foundation along with the Tomah Young Professionals Group and the High School Roots and Shoots Club combed the alleys and parks raking, trimming and picking up trash.

The event started at the alley behind the Tee Pee Supper Club and headed south to the grassy knoll by the south side Kwik Trip. Then groups broke off and went to different areas such as the alleyway on the west side of Superior Ave., the median of Superior Ave. and the Tomah city parks.

After finishing the first alleyway our residents proceeded to Bagley Park by the Aquatic Center, Winnebago Park on Lake Tomah and finished up at the Memorial park where the Tomah Veteran Memorial is located.

The Residents enjoyed the nice sunny day

and the camaraderie of doing something good for the community with each other. In total we had 11 residents volunteer including Turon H., Richard P., Robert S., Robert N., Warren H., Michael V., Brian A., Martin C., Calvin L. and Steven B. VAF Staff included Greg H. & Michelle H. It was wonderful to spend time with the residents out of building 407 and do something so rewarding for our community. Pictured below: VAF's "Clean Team"..



GRANT, continued from page 1

as well as the fourteen counties we currently provide assistance in within the state.

VAF currently provides SSVF services within the following Wisconsin counties: Adams, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Sauk, Trempeleau, Vernon and Wood. Commencing October 1, 2013,

we will also be providing services within the following counties: Barron, Brown, Buffalo, Dunn, Kenosha, Marathon, Outagamie, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Portage, Racine, Rusk, St. Croix, Shawano, Taylor, Walworth, Wau-paca, Waushara and Winnebago.

Armed with new funding, the SSVF program staff is experiencing a renewed drive to assist homeless and at-risk veterans in the area and throughout the state.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY UNIT #53 DONATION

On April 10th three Ladies from the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), Unit 53 from Eau Claire brought a large donation to the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) for the Veterans. The donation included clothing, homemade blankets, movies and 2 VCR players. During their visit they also toured our facility. This is the 2nd tour that VAF has given to the ALA as they have had new members join their organization.

Program Director Dawn Ollendick gave the tour and explained how our program



Pictured are the Auxiliary ladies with Dawn on right.

helps the Veterans and at the request of the Auxiliary members also talked about other donation ideas that would benefit the Veterans.

WALKING TACOS?????

First Bank, located in Tomah, Wisconsin does several community based projects throughout the year. In the past they have done donation drives for hygiene products benefitting the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF), they have sponsored VAF on their website and in their lobby to help promote the work done by the foundation and they have also recognized VAF and our staff as "Ordinary People, Extra Ordinary Citizens" of the community for the work we do helping Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



On May 3rd, 2013, First Bank had a Walking Taco sale at their Superior Avenue location. All proceeds generated from the sales of the Walking Taco event were donated to VAF. This event generated \$409.50 for the foundation. *We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the staff at First Bank for sponsoring this event to benefit our organization and the Veterans we serve.*

What is a Walking Taco? You start with small individual bags of chips (Fritos, Doritos, Cool Ranch chips or another type you like). Open the bag, crush the chips (just a little) and add the fixings for a regular taco into the bag (taco meat, lettuce, cheese, black olive, diced tomato, diced onion, salsa, sour cream and hot sauce – or anything else you may want). There you have it...a Walking Taco.

A DAY AT THE V.E.T.S. RANCH

On April 27th and 28th some of the VAF staff attended a WDVA Women's Vet Expo. This year WDVA decided to hold it in LaValle, WI at the Douglas Legacy Farm. Service providers came to the farm to setup display tables and provide information and assistance to the female veterans as they arrived. What was really nice about the expo this year was the veterans were able to bring their children to enjoy the event.



While there I found out about their program Veterans Equine Trail Services. V.E.T.S. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit equine outreach program to assist those that have already given so much. It was started by Barbara Knopf, a riding instructor and equine outreach guru. Barbara is PATH and COMPASS trained in working with those with physical limitations as well as stress relief. Barbara is also a 100% disabled USMC Beruit-era veteran. The mission of V.E.T.S. is to help veterans regain a sense of purpose and self-determination by fostering the bond between a horse and a human being. **"We hope to bring light to shadows, warmth back to cooled hearts, and joy in living back to those who might be struggling. The Veterans Equine Trail Services is a path that leads veterans towards inner healing. Each person has their own trail towards healing and it is our goal to enrich the lives of veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)".** Today, the farmhouse welcomes veterans for a cup of coffee and time to talk, while outside the horses and dogs offer companionship, learning, and peace of mind.

V.E.T.S runs their program on the Douglas Legacy Farm. In 1862 Benjamin Douglass, a Civil War soldier from Connecticut, decided to call La Valle, WI home. Over the years, one "s" was dropped from the Douglass name, but that was the only change that occurred in the continued family stewardship of the land first homesteaded by Benjamin. In 2011, Russell Douglas, himself a veteran of World War II, passed away. In 2012, his wife, Pearl, joined him in eternal rest. Pearl was intent on honoring the Douglas name, as well as Russell's service to his country. To that end, prior to her death, Pearl placed the farm in a trust to serve veterans and directed that the farmland and farm buildings be used to house horses for veterans and their families to enjoy at no charge.

As a staff we thought it would be worth looking into with our veteran population to see if there would be any interest from them to take a day trip to the farm. On July 16th VAF staff, Rachel and Michelle we able to take a van full of our veterans to the farm for the day. Following are some letters that the veterans wrote about their experience that they had that hot July day:

If you have never heard of V.E.T.S. you might want to read this. V.E.T.S. is a horse farm outreach for retired, active, disabled and PTSD serving men and women. My name is Jerry F. and I am a veteran resident at

the VAF in Tomah. Here at the Veterans Assistance Foundation the counselors are always trying to find a way for vets to find their way to feel comfortable and at ease with themselves in their own skin. One day there was a notice on the bill board of a day trip to a horse farm (V.E.T.S.). I thought to myself that this might be a good way for me to get out in the country and maybe find some peace and quiet for my mind. Although I am not diagnosed with PTSD I do have some social anxiety disorder along with panic disorder. I do not feel comfortable being around too many people at one time. It is hard for me to focus on anything for too long and get frustrated very easily.

When we pull in I feel at ease right away because I see there are two big goofy looking farm dogs. One was a German Shepherd and one was a collie wolf hound mix. As soon as you get out of the car they are right there to greet you. Then the woman who runs the show named Barb comes out and very excited to see us vets. She and her husband are also veterans. She explains to us what V.E.T.S. is all about and then shows us around the barn. We get to throw down some bales of hay to feed the horses. We get to see what it's like cleaning stalls and bedding the stalls with finely shaved woodchips.

I was taking a wheelbarrow of horse manure outside when I opened the barn doors at the end of the barn a five month old baby horse comes running up to me right behind him was a one-year-old colt. They both were nudging me gently because they wanted some attention. I felt very comfortable at that moment. I felt that moment that they needed me and I needed them and it was a good feeling. We had some cookies and lemonade and relaxed under a couple of big shade trees taking in all the beautiful countryside.

*After that we learned how to brush and settle a horse. We all took a turn at learning how to ride a horse correctly. That was exciting and a lot of fun. Then for about a half an hour we sat there and fed all the horses apples and carrots which is also very calm for me and relaxing. Not only calming and relaxing but I also felt a sense of being appreciated by the horses that we were feeding. For once in my life someone appreciated what I was doing for them and that someone just happened to be a beautiful loving Morgan horse. **By: Gerald F.***

I would like to thank the VAF for providing us the opportunity to visit the V.E.T.S Horse — V.E.T.S. RANCH, continued on page 4



SHELL ROTELLA DONATION

Tomah, Wisconsin hosted the 38th Annual Budweiser Dairyland Super National Truck and Tractor Pull June 20th through the 23rd at the local recreation park. Shell Rotella, a first-time sponsor at the pull came to Tomah with their Super Rigs Truck Show. In connection with their truck show they always conduct an auction to benefit a local non-profit in the area of the show location. This year they selected the Veterans Assistance Foundation as the recipient of a monetary donation collected from the sponsor's auction.

On Saturday Shell Rotella hosted the Super Rigs Awards for the trucks entered in the truck show competition. Approximately one hundred trucks were entered in the truck show and each competitor received a gift package of several vehicle maintenance items. In addition to the monetary donation received from the auction, two winners from the truck show donated the Visa gift cards that they were awarded. Selected truck winners will be featured in the 2014 Shell Rotella Super Rigs calendar.

Following the truck awards, Shell Rotella hosted a charity auction. They collected items such as autographed NASCAR memorabilia, an Autographed Green Bay Packer Photo, and a scale pedal tractor for the auction. Locally donated auction items included gift certificates, clothing and hygiene necessities, and various other assortments like coolers, gift baskets, and commemorative novelties. Items were donated from several different local businesses. All proceeds from the auction went to the Veterans Assistance Foundation.

The Foundation is incredibly grateful for Shell Rotella's support and the generosity of the auction contributors. Following a fun (and jet) fueled weekend at the Tractor Pull, the charity auction was an inspiring and remarkable end.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Since 1997 the Veterans Assistance Foundation (VAF) has sponsored a section of Highway 21 west of Tomah going just past Tunnel City toward Fort McCoy. Our second trip out for the year to cleanup VAF's strip of Adopt a Highway was completed on June 28th. Staff members Rachel and Bill went out with eight residents of the program to complete the task. Since this was the second round for the year it didn't take as long as it usually does, as there wasn't all of the accumulation of trash from over the winter that we get with the first cleanup trip of the year. They were able to cleanup six bags of trash from the road way and ditches which helps to improve the look of the highway for those traveling it. We came away with a good feeling of accomplishment



(and a few mosquito bites).

With the renewal notice this year thanking VAF for their continued participation, came notice of a new instructional video on their web site and a safety alert. The safety alert stated that in 2012 there were reports of homemade explosive devices being placed on public lands. There hadn't been any reports of incidents on state highways. They asked that we follow these guidelines:

Always be cautious of the items you pick up. Items may not appear to be what they are. This can include typical soda bottles with liquid in them. Always approach a container from uphill and upwind and be wary of suspicious odors. If an item is questionable do not pick it up. Put your safety and the volunteers' safety first.

V.E.T.S. RANCH, continued from page 3 –

Ranch. With an extra thanks to Rachel and Michelle for organizing the trip. I really enjoyed the experience. It offered a very relaxing setting which allowed me to precipitate as much or as little as I wanted. There was plenty to do including grooming the horses, cleaning and feeding, and of course the chance to ride a well mannered Morgan horse. I personally enjoyed hanging out with the dogs, feeding the chickens, sitting in the shade, and drinking lemonade while relaxing.

Barbara, the ranch foreman, was very friendly and definitely knew her stuff. She added a real personal touch to the experience. Oh, and this is not a commercial "city slickers" petting zoo; it is a real ranch with about 30+ head of Morgan horses.

I had a great time. In hindsight, I don't remember talking or even thinking about my life situation while I was at the ranch. It was exactly what I needed. Once again thanks, **Robert P.**

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to go to the "horse farm" (as we call it). The name is actually September Farms, which is part of an organization that rescues horses and also caters to veterans. As a veteran herself, Barb is able to connect with others and it was easy to see why. Barb can hold a conversation even though I am not a great conversationalist, the never ending stories Barb was sharing kept me listening with interest.

I have worked with horses when I was young, and the opportunity to do it again took me back to some carefree days. Even as I was shoveling manure, I felt at peace. The most rewarding part of the day was when I finished cleaning one of the stalls and put down some fresh woodchips. The stallion actually got down and started rolling in the chips. I believe it was his

way of showing how much he appreciated it. Of course, I then had to brush him down after that and got him looking good, which he seemed to enjoy as well. They did have one horse with an injury to its leg. I watched as Barb tended to the bandages and I could sense the great caring concern she had for her.

I would have liked to say the best part of going was riding, but that was not the case for me. I most enjoyed just being around animals, which included two dogs, rabbits, chickens, and of course over 40 horses. When it was time to ride, I made sure to be right there to learn how to get them saddled. As soon as Barb had brought out the horses we were to ride, I knew which one I was going to ride, the big one. My time away from the VA is very limited, and having the opportunity to go to the horse farm was greatly appreciated. Thank You, **Mike L.**

I would like to say that my experience going to the V.E.T.S. horse ranch was very enjoyable. I also think that all the other vets and staff got a lot out of it. There were things to do for everyone and it was a very enjoyable learning experience for me. I also liked the peace and quiet time and looking at the wonderful location and woods. Riding the horses, feeding the chickens and dogs topped it all off. The staff there was very friendly and kind and very open to listening to what we had to say. I would just like to say thanks to all who made this possible and that it was one of the most enjoyable times I've had since I have been at the VA in Tomah. Thanks very much, **Scott L.**

For more information about the farm and the V.E.T.S. program please visit their web-site at <http://veteransequinetrailservices.org/home.html>

Barb, Thank you and by great demand we will be making a return trip.

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 (MLA) 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.

OUR FALLEN HERO'S

The following veterans were present or past residents of VAF:

Michael S. – USMC Michael G. – US Army
 05/19/62 – 05/17/13 11/20/50 – 06/12/13

Herbert G. – USAF Tim W. – US Army
 04/17/45 – 05/19/13 07/31/59 – 06/13/13

WISH LIST

****Shower Shoes are currently in great demand and we could use many pairs.**

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.