

## Former Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs Honored

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP – A U.S. Congressman and two generals with longstanding service to the Pennsylvania National Guard were inducted at Ft. Indiantown Gap July 14 into the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Hall of Fame.

The inductees were: the late Maj. Gen. Robert E. Harris; retired Brig. Gen. Cecil B. Hengeveld; and Congressman John P. Murtha Jr., from Johnstown, Cambria County. Murtha was unable to attend the ceremony and will be inducted at a later date.

Harris, formerly of Palmyra, had a 42-year military career that began in 1950 when he entered the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps at Penn State University. He entered active duty in 1954, earning his pilot's wings in 1956. After several more years in the Air Force Reserve, he joined the Pennsylvania Air National Guard in 1962. During his career, he held numerous command positions and flew combat missions in Thailand, Grenada and Panama.

Harris was commander of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard from Sept. 1984 until his retirement in Sept. 1992. He was promoted to brigadier general in 1985 and major general in 1987. He died in 2002 after a long illness. He received many awards and decorations during his lifetime, including the Air Force Distinguished Service medal, the Air Force's highest peacetime award.

Speaking on his father's behalf, Lt. Col. William E. Harris, a member of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, said that even though his father died seven years ago, he still gets approached frequently by Guard members who remember his father and speak fondly of him.

"If my dad were here today," Harris said, "he would probably say it's just an honor to even be considered for the Hall of Fame."

Hengeveld, of Hummelstown, Dauphin County, was an Army pilot whose career spanned four decades. As a member of the First Cavalry Division, Hengeveld flew attack helicopters in Vietnam in 1967. The following year, he returned to the United States as an aerial gunnery instructor at the Army Aviation



Retired Brigadier General (PA) Cecil Hengeveld was among those recently honored at Fort Indiantown Gap for this year's PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. Hengeveld, a retired Army helicopter pilot, served as Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs from 2001 until 2007.

Center, Fort Rucker, AL. He left active duty in 1969 and joined the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in 1970.

He held numerous staff and leadership positions, and retired as a colonel in 1998 after commanding the Eastern Army National Guard Aviation Training Site, a major federal training activity at Fort Indiantown Gap. In 2001, he returned to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs as the Deputy Adjutant General for Veteran's Affairs and was given the title of brigadier general. He held the post until his retirement in late 2007. During his tenure, he oversaw the implementation of many programs that helped Pennsylvania's more than one million veterans.

Hengeveld thanked all the people who helped him in his career along the way, and praised the efforts of DMVA personnel who worked under his command in the veteran's affairs bureau.

"It was their good work that helped more people than they will ever know," he said.

His military awards and decorations include the Air Medal with 30 oak leaf clusters, Air Medal with "V" device, Army Commendation Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and Pennsylvania Commendation Medal.

Murtha, a former Marine who became the first Vietnam combat veteran elected to the U.S. Congress,

was honored for his longstanding support of the Pennsylvania National Guard and his efforts in securing funding, equipment and facilities for the organization.

The DMVA Hall of Fame, established in 1998, recognizes unique and exemplary contributions to the department and/or to the Pennsylvania National Guard. This award not only recognizes significant achievements, but also the honor and prestige an individual has brought upon the department, the Pennsylvania National Guard and Pennsylvania veterans. Election into the Hall of Fame is the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the department.

## State Veterans' Homes Now Smoke-Free

FT INDIANTOWN GAP - As of September 1st, all six of the homes in the Pennsylvania State Veterans' Home System will become smoke-free facilities. This means that smoking will not be permitted anywhere inside the facility; unless you have been "grandfathered". Obviously, this is a major break from the "smoke 'em if you got 'em" tradition many older veterans brought with them from their military days.

The rationale behind this decision is based on

overall health concerns and a dedication to the care of residents at each veterans' home. Other than obvious health conditions (cancer and heart disease), current research has outlined the detrimental health consequences associated with second-hand smoke. It is only fitting that the homes take this into account when providing quality care for residents.

"We realize that our current waiting lists include smokers and closure of these indoor designated smoking areas will, no doubt, be challenging for these

veterans," Paul Cain, Director of the Bureau for Veterans Homes acknowledges. Mr. Cain has submitted written notification of this new policy to those veterans currently on waiting lists. He strongly feels that this will help negate any unpleasant surprises for those awaiting admission to one of the homes.

"We recognize there will be numerous concerns as we move to implement this health and safety policy, and we are prepared to address them." Cain explains. The homes anticipate that there will be some push back, but the Bureau is determined to see this policy executed. As well, facility staffers are prepared to assist and will offer a gentle approach of counseling and a smoking cessation program for those interested individuals.

## Specter & Shinseki Face Veterans' Questions



U.S. Senator Arlen Specter (right) and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki (left) listen to a question being posed by Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Seamus McCaffery (with microphone) during a town hall meeting at Drexel University in Philadelphia. The meeting presented an opportunity to ask the pair questions relating to veterans affairs. Most of the questions had to do with veterans health care. Shinseki emphasized that the President's "health care reform will have no effect on veterans health care."

## September is National Preparedness Month

HARRISBURG - September marks the 6th annual National Preparedness Month—a time when federal, state and local partners encourage citizens to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities.

Last year, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency launched the ReadyPA campaign to help the public prepare for a disaster. The campaign's Web

site, [www.ReadyPA.org](http://www.ReadyPA.org), offers important information on how to protect yourself and your loved ones, such as what to include in a preparedness kit and how to formulate a family emergency plan.

Knowing what to do is your best defense in any emergency so start planning now. This September, share that message with others by encouraging them to “Be Informed, Be Prepared, and Be Involved.”

## Supporting Our Troops: The Post 9/11 GI Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, President Obama celebrated the beginning of implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. This bill, through its Yellow Ribbon Programs and partnerships with colleges and universities throughout the nation, will provide our service members with the most generous educational benefits package since the original GI Bill of 1944.

Over 3,400 agreements were received from the 1,100 schools participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program. The Yellow Ribbon Program, a provision of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, funds tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate.

“Sixty-five years ago, a grateful nation offered a generation of World War II heroes the chance to go to college,” President Obama said. “The original GI Bill paved the way to a better life for millions of veterans and their families while building the foundation of the American middle class. Today, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is affording a new generation of heroes a 21st century version of that same opportunity.”

“The President and I know that the nation's courageous service members and their families have shouldered the heaviest burden for our country's security and safety over the past eight years,” VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said. “This new GI Bill is a way for a grateful nation to tangibly demonstrate our heartfelt appreciation and abiding respect for their service.”

“More than two and half

years ago, we began with the simple concept that those who have been serving since 9/11 should have the same opportunity for a first class educational future as those who served during World War II,” Senator Jim H. Webb said. “This bill provides a modern and fair educational benefit to address the needs of those who answered the call of duty to our country--those who moved toward the sound of the guns--often at great sacrifice.”

With the implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, our nation has an opportunity to honor America's veterans in a very tangible way. The maximum benefit under the Post-9/11 GI Bill allows veterans, service members, Reservists and Guard members the ability to receive an in-state, undergraduate education at a public institution at no cost.

## Congressman Sestak Discusses Veterans Issues



U.S. Congressman Joe Sestak (center) met with veterans at the Pennsylvania Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center (PVMSEC) to discuss veterans issues and how his office can provide assistance. Sestak remarked that veterans had come a long way from the days of the Vietnam War in terms of public acceptance. Although he conceded that much has already been done for veterans, “there is still a lot of work to be done.”

Further, to honor their many sacrifices, the Post 9/11 GI Bill allows for the transferability of unused benefits to eligible career service members' families.

President Obama has directed Secretary Shinseki to create a results-driven, 21st Century VA. Since

## **Gilda's Club Brings Military Veterans Together for Cancer Support and Education**

WARMINSTER – A recently organized Veterans and Cancer Task Force will host its first educational program for military veterans and their families, Saturday, September 12th at the Health and Wellness Center by Doylestown Hospital, 847 Easton Road, Route 611 in Warrington, PA. This free event is sponsored by the Doylestown Hospital Cancer Center, in conjunction with Gilda's Club Delaware Valley.

Military veterans dealing with any cancer, their families and friends are invited to attend this informative meeting.

Dan Fraley, Director of Bucks County Office of Veterans Affairs, will provide information related to Agent Orange issues and veterans' benefits information for veterans with cancer. Darlene Furey, program director for Gilda's Club Delaware Valley, will discuss

the signing of this monumental legislation, VA has made meeting the August 1 implementation deadline a top priority. As of July 30th VA has processed over 112,000 claims.

the importance of psycho-social and emotional support, as well as participate in a panel discussion. Medical oncologist from Bux-Mont Oncology Hematology Medical Associates, Doylestown Hospital Cancer Center also will conduct an open question and answer period for attendees.

Registration and refreshments are scheduled from 8 to 8:45 am and the program will conclude at noon. Interested military veterans and their families should pre-register no later than September 10, 2009 by email to [Darlene@gildasclubdelval](mailto:Darlene@gildasclubdelval) or call 215-441-3290, extension 114.

More information about the Veterans and Cancer Task Force is available at <http://www.gildasclubdelval.org>.

## **Geisinger Receives \$375K Grant To Help Rural Veterans**

DANVILLE – A team of clinicians from Geisinger's department of psychiatry in collaboration with researchers from the Geisinger Center for Health Research recently received an award of \$375,000 from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to address war-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affecting returning rural veterans and their families.

Clearly the nation's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have hit home in Pennsylvania, which ranks third in the country for the largest number of personnel serving in the military as well as the highest number of deployed National Guard troops. More than 21,000 Pennsylvania service members have been deployed since Sept. 11, 2001.

Last spring, Geisinger gathered some of the country's leading military and civilian PTSD experts to discuss ways to improve the coordination of care for rural veterans and their families.

"The conference was a great first step in engaging the public, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), community healthcare providers and government policy makers to consider how to address the problems

of PTSD in rural areas," noted Sharon Larson, Ph.D., co-director of Geisinger's Rural Health Policy Institute.

According to Larson, grant funds will be used to build on that effort by developing a model to improve the way Geisinger practitioners identify and care for PTSD in returning veterans and their families.

"It's our goal that the program meets the needs of veterans in the communities Geisinger serves while also being scalable in Pennsylvania and nationally," she added.

Geisinger continues to work closely with its neighboring VA hospitals and clinics to recognize and refer veterans affected by psychological war injuries for appropriate care. According to Larson, often problems surface when citizen soldiers are "safely" back home – yet help may not be readily available (or convenient).

"We hope to build an effective infrastructure that coordinates clinical, education and community resources to best meet the needs of our returning veterans and their families," noted, Stephen Paolucci,

M.D., Geisinger's chair of the Department of Psychiatric Services Chair.

"We have \$375,000 to develop and pilot a model program, but I am hopeful that we will be able to secure additional funds to extend the program beyond Geisinger," said Mark Reisinger, vice president, government relations.

### About Geisinger Health System:

Founded in 1915, Geisinger Health System is one of the nations largest integrated health services organizations. Serving more than 2.6 million residents throughout central and northeastern Pennsylvania, the physician-led organization is a nationally recognized leader in the use of electronic health records, patient access and engagement in their health-care, and in medical education for the next

generation. Geisinger is comprised of three medical center campuses, a 740-member group practice, a not-for-profit health insurance company and research that extends across our large system- all dedicated to creating new models for scientific discovery, quality patient care, and successful clinical outcomes. Geisinger's Weis Center, Center for Health Research and Center

for Clinical Studies include basic science, population-based and clinical trials research, complemented by collaborative relationships with top academic centers. Geisinger Ventures, the system's for profit entrepreneurial arm, seeks and promotes opportunities to speed the delivery of medical innovation to benefit patients. For more information, visit [www.geisinger.org](http://www.geisinger.org).

## DVVH Gets New Sign



Delaware Valley Veterans' Home in Philadelphia received a brand new sign for its entranceway during a recent unveiling ceremony. The sign marks the entrance to the facility's driveway from Southampton Road. Pictured are (left to right): Commandant Peter Ojeda, Volunteer Coordinator Jack O'Donnell, Driver Jack Horton, and President of the Delaware Valley Veterans' Home Advisory Council, Dan Fraley.

## New Chief of Staff Appointed at the Lebanon VA Medical Center

LEBANON - Dr. Kanan Chatterjee, MD, MBA, has been appointed Chief of Staff at the Lebanon VA Medical Center in Lebanon, PA.

Dr. Chatterjee began his Federal career with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 2004 as the Chief of Primary Care at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center, Fayetteville, NC. Prior to his Fayetteville VA assignment,

Dr. Chatterjee and his family lived in Minnesota where he spent 19 years practicing family medicine.

Dr. Chatterjee completed his medical residency in Family Medicine at the University of Minnesota in 1988, and is a Diplomat of the American Board of Family Medicine. Dr. Chatterjee also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) Degree from the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis.

Dr. Chatterjee is very passionate about, "Providing exceptional service, seamless access, and the high-



Dr. Kanan Chatterjee, MD, MBA, has been selected as the new Chief of Staff for Lebanon VA Medical Center

est quality of care to our Veterans."

Dr. Chatterjee and his wife, Malabika, have two children and enjoy traveling.

# State Veterans' Homes Staff Assist Their Own During Budget Crisis

The staff at each the six state veterans' homes are accustomed to helping the veteran residents who live at the homes. They assist them with the routine tasks of their daily lives, make sure they've taken their medicine, and provide activities and trips for them to occupy their time.

Recently, however this time, the staff at three of the homes had to render assistance to an unlikely group: themselves.

The budget impasse at the state capitol caused paychecks for all state workers to be delayed for an indefinite amount of time starting on the first of July. This caused many of those who occupy the low-end of the wage scale some unexpected financial hardship.

Three of the homes quickly went into action, devising various methods for assisting these people.

At Southwestern Veterans' Center in Pittsburgh, the staff took up a collection to purchase gift cards and bus passes for those less fortunate, as well as to distribute cash.

Lynn Lewkowicz, the Volunteer Coordinator, acted as a conduit for each transaction, ensuring complete confidentiality. There was no established criteria for an individual to receive the assistance, but the entire staff was able to maintain the program's integrity by intervening any time there was a question of abuse of funds.

The program was well-received by the staff. Some employees came forward to ask for assistance, others were referred by their supervisors as potential recipients. A few anonymous donations were put directly into someone's hands.

A total of \$2,025 was raised during this time, with another \$2,200 scheduled to be committed. The excess funds were returned after the state employees were paid on August 7th. A total of 39 employees benefited from this informal program.

At Southeast Veterans' Center (SEVC) in Spring City, donations of "food boxes" were solicited from the more well-off members of the staff. Each box consisted of two complete meals for four persons, laundry detergent and toiletry items such as toothbrushes, tooth paste, and soap.

The needs of the employee determined the eligibility to receive these boxes. Bruce Grissom, Director of Social Services for the facility, volunteered to coordinate the effort. He acted as the

go-between having employees who requested a food box contact him directly. Grissom made sure there was a box available at the end of the worker's shift. A total of 27 boxes were distributed.

The Center also received a donation from "a friend of SEVC" who contributed monies for WAWA gasoline cards. State Senator Andy Dinniman joined in the effort by arranging for a visit from the Chester County Food Bank Truck. The food bank offered 2,000 pounds of vegetables for all members of the staff.

The Senator explained that this was his way of giving back to the employees of SEVC, who are serving Pennsylvania's veterans.

At the Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home in Erie, the staff organized a drawing for \$10 gas cards. The drawing continued for two weeks, offering four cards each week. The cards were purchased by three unnamed members of the management staff at the facility.

At Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home in Hollidaysburg, staff members were offered a one-dollar lunch at the dietary building, payable after pay checks were received. In addition, this provided a social activity for the staff members to interact with each other.

Employees were also given information as to how to obtain groceries at a discount price from the "Angel Food Ministries" program.

Caring for people is a central part of what the staff does at each of these homes. That caring attitude is what brought about the creation of these informal employee aid programs.



Residents are usually the primary concern of staff members in each of the six state veterans' homes, but this caring attitude was recently focused on those who were most affected by the state worker's pay freeze in August.

# Chance Pascual: A True Performer, a True Inspiration

By Michael Rapp

SCRANTON - Chance Pascual is a former professional musician who resides at the Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center in Scranton, Pennsylvania. On Monday, August the 17th, he treated residents and staff to another typical Chance performance in the facility's multi-purpose room. Backed by E.J. the D.J., Chance had feet tapping and hands in the air during every song. Some residents couldn't help but get up and dance, and all wore smiles as Chance worked his way through his set list. Every time Chance performs he lights up the room, helping his fellow residents forget their troubles for just a little while. But this is only the most recent chapter in the story of a man who has brought joy to people through music for his entire life.

Born in Philadelphia, Chance remembers his first musical experiences singing along with the radio as a child, and singing in church. He knew then there was something special about music, and he seemed to have a gift for it. His suspicions proved true when he entered a talent show at fourteen, and his group won first prize. "Fifty cents, split five ways," he recalls with a chuckle.

Better opportunities would come, however. At fifteen, he joined up with a doo-wop quintet called The Students. The group recorded the single "I'm So Young" on Chess records, but the Marine Corps would call Chance away at seventeen, and he would never have the opportunity to tour with his band mates.

While in the Marines, Chance continued to perform, singing with a band called The Stews. When his enlistment ended, he participated in various contests and shows until a co-worker at Montgomery Ward suggested Chance join his group. They became known as The Rubber Soles, and the band enjoyed success in local clubs and concert halls with Chance as the lead vocalist. He was also the only black face in the group, on a scene dominated by white bands and white crowds. The segregation and racism of the 1960's was never far away.

"I could perform onstage," said Chance, "but I had to keep out of the crowd, stay away from the women. I pretty much hid backstage between sets. It was a tough thing to deal with."



Chance Pascual, a resident at Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center in Scranton performs for his fellow residents.

After the Rubber Soles disbanded, Chance sang briefly with Billy Stewart. Then, while working in a steel mill in Phillipsburg, New Jersey in 1968, he met a man named Willie Pratt.

"After work one day he asked me about my interest in doing music again, about joining a band, and we talked for a while," said Chance. "Eventually he just said, 'Get in the car,' and that was that."

With Chance on lead vocals, the band called The Dudes quickly became regulars on the national scene, opening for artists such as Chuck Berry, Bill Haley, Jimmy Clanton, the Shirelles and Sha Na Na. Things were going well, until a Motown rep approached Chance about doing a coast-to-coast tour. The problem was, he only wanted Chance.

"Biggest mistake of my life," he remembers. With a girl at home who would later become his wife, and not wanting to abandon his band mates, Chance declined the offer and the tour went on without him. "I kick myself now, but it seemed like the right decision at the time."

The Dudes eventually broke up, due to the typical irreconcilable differences that lead to the demise of most bands, no matter how talented. Chance sang for short stints with the bands Joyous and Enix before settling into a career as a session musician, and performing dates as a hired talent. He was still a pro, and he had attained what most musicians can only dream of: a career doing what they love. But when asked about the difference between being a working pro and an up-and-comer striving for the big time, Chance smiled

and chose the latter.

“It was never about money,” he said. “I wanted that record in my hands, the one I knew I’d made. That’s what I’ve always wanted.”

These days, Chance is a key member of the award-winning Gino Merli Choir, and performs regularly for residents and family. But the thought of that record is still alive and well. “I’m working to put something together,” says Chance. “I still have it in me.”

He’s shared billing with Sly and the Family

Stone, the Delphonics, and Jay and the Techniques. He’s performed at Madison Square Garden. He was part of a musical generation that sculpted the Motown sound, and he witnessed the explosion of rock ‘n’ roll from ground zero. With all that Chance Pascual has achieved in his musical career, it will surprise no one who knows him when he again showcases his gift for the world at large. We at the GMVC are truly blessed to enjoy his talent.

*Michael Rapp is the Marketing & Admissions Coordinator at the Gino J. Merli Veterans’ Center*

## Veterans Have A ‘Place’ In Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH - Sid Singer had a vision; a place that would be just for veterans. This place would feature housing for homeless vets, a place to meet, get help for any personal problems, and a community center that would be open to all veterans. That dream is Veterans’ Place, located on Washington Boulevard in downtown Pittsburgh.

Veterans’ Place is a refuge for those seeking to reintegrate into society after having suffered personal setbacks from addictions and homelessness. The facility works with the Highland Drive VA Medical Center homeless veterans program, receiving referrals from those who have moved successfully through the program. Veterans’ Place offers veterans a place to stay and help in dealing with their personal problems.

Before the facility was created, there was only the VA homeless program, which only lasted for a short 90 days, after which, the veteran usually had nowhere to go. Most of them ended up back where they started.

“Before Veterans’ Place, these people were going back out on the street,” Sid Singer comments.

The VA approached Singer to create a facility that would fill the gap and allow time for these vets to re-establish themselves. Singer began by obtaining an old housing development that was built in the 1920’s and had fallen into disrepair. The buildings had become a gathering place for the criminal element of the city. With the help of Habitat For Humanity and a lot of volunteer effort, the old buildings were renovated and now consist of a central building that houses the offices and community center and apartment buildings that can accommodate up to four people.

Singer believes that there is strong public support



Each of the apartments at Veterans’ Place have a kitchen and living room as common areas.

for the veteran community in Pittsburgh.

“People want to help the veterans,” says Singer.

The Veterans’ Place program consists of a one-year commitment to the program and getting oneself straight. There are two mandatory meetings per month, where those who are in the program can talk about anything they wish and the program administrators can address any of their concerns. It also serves as a way to bring the community together and keep them talking to one another. Isolation is one of the ways people find themselves homeless.

The only rule, other than making the mandatory meetings, is no drugs or alcohol. Many of those who are homeless got that way as a result of an addiction to drugs, alcohol, or gambling. Eliminating these elements is a key part of recovering from the condition that led to homelessness. The VA conducts periodic drug testing, but most are serious enough to stay clean



Many of those who had once participated in the Veterans' Place program attend the After Care meetings, held in the Community Center. The Community Center is a portion of the facility that is open to all veterans.

and sober.

"There's lots of good things going on here," Dmitri, one of the veterans living at the facility remarks.

Dmitri is getting VA vocational assistance as he attempts to rebuild his life. In the Army, he was an artilleryman; now, he is learning new skill that will help him succeed in the world.

The program has a high success rate with most of the participants staying off of drugs and not straying back into homelessness. Veterans can participate in the program for up to two years. Only 50% of those participants stay for the full two years. Most are focused on trying to fix what went wrong in their life and get back to where they were before they fell into their situation.

While in the program, each veteran is assigned a caseworker, who helps them find resources to resolve any issues they have, or to gain control of their addictions.

The center has many different programs available to help with these issues, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, pro-bono legal assistance, and computer and business training. They are also developing a partnership with Veterans Leadership Place, another homeless veterans' facility, so they can expand the range of services they make available to the participants. "They work their butts off to make this a great place to live; a place to grow," Jim, another resident explains.

Jim had been an investment banker for 30 years

and had recently been Vice President of Mortgage Operations with PNC Bank. He had served aboard the USS Enterprise as an aviation supply technician. After finding himself suddenly with no money, no place to live, and no prospects for work, he now has a job as a janitor at the VA Hospital and is living in an apartment at the facility.

"I'm just crawling back to where I can be comfortable with my life."

Dave, a U.S. Army veteran, has managed to follow his own recovery plan.

Once a cavalry scout, Dave served ten years in the Army before leaving military service. Unfortunately, he developed a gambling habit which cost him everything. When he got to the point where he was on the verge of homelessness, he sought help through the VA.

Dave is now working for the VA as a housekeeper in their Aspinwall facility.

"The norm is to get back to where you were," he observes.

During the course of their stay at Veterans' Place, all three of them have gained a new perspective on life as well as a new direction. The participants also gain a new respect for volunteering and often feel compelled to give something back to the community that helped them when they were down. Many helped with the Stand Down Event which offers help to homeless veterans.

"It's important to give something back to the program," says Jim.

The 48 bed facility still has two houses that have to be renovated. Although not at maximum occupancy yet, Stanley Rolnik, President of the Board at Veter-



Community Center offers a wide variety of activities and is open to all veterans.

ans' Place is anticipating an increase in homeless vets as those who return from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder begin to grapple with those issues. "It's important to get them working on things," Rolnik comments.

"Western Pennsylvania ranks high in the number of homeless veterans," Sid Singer observes.

To meet this increase, the facility has received \$10,000 per year from VA funds. They are also getting financial assistance from the city of Pittsburgh Urban Renewal and the Allegheny County Department of Economics.

Many of those who have gone through the Veterans' Place program often stay in contact with the

facility and attend the After Care program for those who have become self-sufficient. The residents have come together to create their own community, even having their own periodic events, such as picnics. These events are often difficult to schedule due to the residents' work schedules.

Sid Singer stepped down from his role as the President of the Board. At 85 years old, he felt it was time to step down. He still has one dream, yet to be fulfilled: a home for all veterans. The idea is like Veterans' Place, but on a grander scale.

"It's another dream I have, but I'm going to have to leave that one to someone else to build."

## Veterans Leadership Program Provides Guidance and Direction for Veterans

PITTSBURGH - Veterans Leadership Program (VLP) has been assisting veterans and their families since 1982. Their largest area of focus is on helping homeless veterans, but that's not all they do.

The group was formed by some Vietnam Veterans who saw a need for the kind of services VLP offers. At that time, mills were closing, manufacturing jobs were disappearing, and many veterans were out of work and out of hope. VLP's mission was to bring renewed strength and self-reliance to all veterans and their family members who have selflessly served the nation by providing essential employment, housing, and other vital supportive services.

"We help veterans," Jesse Rodriguez, Financial Officer for the organization states simply.

The VLP helps by operating programs that primarily combat homelessness. They work closely with the VA's homeless program, receiving numerous referrals from the local VA hospital. VLP, however, is not as stringent as the VA is on accepting veterans for their programs. Some veterans who have not been able to qualify for VA support may still be able to receive assistance from VLP.

The ultimate goal of the organization is to get veterans to be self-sufficient again. There are three main programs that VLP runs.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is one of the largest programs they conduct and is designed for those who are considered "chronically homeless." A chronically homeless person is one who is currently living on the street with no place to go.



Homeless veterans receive haircuts during Pittsburgh's Stand Down event in 2008. The barber was the most-used service of the event.

The HVRP offers counseling and instruction on job skills, instructions for preparing for an interview, clothing purchase for an interview, and transportation. They also provide these veterans with job leads and often conduct feedback on interviews the veterans have attended to determine what went well and what didn't.

VLP has begun to work closely with Helmet to Hardhats, a non-profit organization that seeks to place veterans into jobs in the construction industry.

The Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) provides employment assistance to all veterans with a focus on 'green' jobs.

VLP's Jobs for Veterans Program provides employment assistance to all veterans and is run from the agency's Johnstown office.

The Emergency Shelter Grant is a program that takes care of immediate housing needs. These funds



Computers are available for use in helping job seekers find and apply for jobs. Veterans Leadership Program provides job search and referral services to all veterans.

allow a veteran to obtain transitional housing to stave off homelessness while they try to recover from whatever situation that brought them to the brink of homelessness.

VLP is also the largest provider of subsidized housing to homeless veterans in the Pittsburgh-region, operating six transitional and permanent housing programs that serve over 180 veterans and family member annually.

The United Way of Allegheny County is a major partner with VLP, recently awarding the agency a highly competitive grant to provide VLP's Career Development and Comprehensive Supportive Services Program to the region's veterans, their families, and others in need.

VLP has made 3,827 referrals to dozens of social services, government agencies, private sector businesses, and military organizations.

VLP is also active in conducting Stand Down events in the Pittsburgh area. These events are open to the public, although they're focused toward veterans. This open forum allows homeless people to find out what assistance is available to them. Homeless veterans who attend these events are entered into the VA system and many government and private organizations are on hand to lend their support to these people.

Stand Down 2008 was the first Stand Down held in Pittsburgh since 1995. Over 20 agencies from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and over 100 volunteers provided everything from haircuts to VA benefit enrollment to medical and eye exams. They also provided food, housing assistance, and many other essentials. 227 individuals were served at Stand Down 2008. Stand Down 2009 was held on August 15, 2009 and included more service providers deliver-

ing essential services to even more veterans in need.

Any veteran, regardless of financial status, can participate in VLP's employment programs.

The Job Club, another program offered by VLP, helps veterans prepare for job interviews and assists them in writing resumes.

VLP has also been working closely with Allegheny County Court officials, the VA, and other agencies to establish a Veterans Court. The goal of this initiative is to provide court-directed, community-based support to veterans encountering the criminal justice system.

In addition to the job search, a VA representative stops by weekly to discuss benefits with the veterans participating in VLP programs. CareerLink and the Vet Center also provide services at VLP's offices.

318 out of 472 of VLP's clients were successfully employed during the last year, however, the increasing number of homeless in the Pittsburgh area is cause for concern.

"We're seeing more OEF/OIF, younger veterans," Rodriguez notes.

Since many of these vets are coming back from deployment, the jobs they had before they left may be non-existent now. In some cases, they cannot function in the same manner, due to PTSD suffered while deployed. Reintegrating these people back into the community is a primary concern for VLP.

VLP works with over 100 local and statewide service providers. Through these combined efforts, VLP's large and diverse client base receive a complete continuum of employment, housing, and supportive needs. While returning veterans have come home from a war on foreign soil, VLP continues to wage its own war against veterans homelessness and acts as an advocate for Pittsburgh area veterans.



Over 100 volunteers from 20 different organizations participated in Pittsburgh's Stand Down 2008. They provided valuable services to 227 people in need,

## September 2009 Community Events

If you know of an upcoming event that you'd like to see on our calendar, email [cnelson@state.pa.us](mailto:cnelson@state.pa.us) or call (717) 861-6979 and we'll add it to the Community Calendar section. Newsletters are published at the beginning of each month, so be sure to get the dates to us as soon as possible.

- **September 4** - Battle of the Bulge Presentation: David Collie will host a presentation on the Battle of the Bulge, concentrating on how it could have been prevented. 12:00 PM at St John's Lutheran Church, 330 Ferry Street, Easton, PA
- **September 8 to 11** - Carlisle Barracks Transition Assistance Seminar: This is a 4 day program designed to help the individual transition from the military with as much information and job search material to ease their transition. To reserve a seat, or for more information, call (717) 245-3684/4357. 8:00 AM at Ely Hall, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA
- **September 9** - Philadelphia Career Fair: For more information, go to <http://www.careerbuilder.com>. 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, 1201 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA
- **September 10** - Jobadelphia Career Fair: More information on <http://jobcircle.com>. 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM at the Wachovia Center, 3601 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA
- **September 11** - Federal Resume Workshop: Federal Resume and Identifying Key Words from the Posted Federal Job Announcement First Session is from 0830–1130 Hours Second Session is from 1300–1600 Hours. Held at the Capitol Region CareerLink, Harrisburg, PA
- **September 11** - USMCL Film Showing - "The USS New York": Part of the Hero Ship series, this 45 minute film was made for the History International Channel. The bow of the ship was made with steel from the Twin Towers. This film was used at the christening of the USS New York this summer. 6:30 PM at Camp Hill Methodist Church, 417 S 22nd St, Camp Hill, PA
- **September 12 to 13** - Fellow veterans offering advice, options, opportunities, and assistance to homeless veterans. Intake registration: Sept 11 & 12 only Contact George Brown for more information at (610) 789-6609 or Jerry Corrento at (215) 743-6179 or (215) 840-2257 (cell). 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at Wissinoming Park, 5900 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
- **September 12** - Cancer Support and Educational Program for Veterans: Topics include Agent Orange and benefits for veterans with cancer, The importance of social and emotional cancer support, and a panel discussion featuring a medical oncologist. 8:00 AM at the Health and Wellness Center, 847 Easton Road, Rt 611, Warrington, PA

Pennsylvania Office of the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs

Main Office:	1-800-547-2838
Philadelphia Field Office:	1-866-754-8637
Pittsburgh Field Office:	1-866-754-8636

- **September 12** - 1st Annual Foxhole Invitational Golf Tournament: 4-Person scramble. Steak & shrimp dinner, door prizes, and raffle drawings. Registration deadline is August 22. Download and submit attached registration form. \$65 per golfer, \$260 per foursome. Proceeds go to PA National Guard Museum. 1:30 PM at Blue Mountain Golf Course, 628 Blue Mountain Rd, Fredericksburg, PA
- **September 15** - Advance Health Care Job Fair: Visit <http://health-care-job-fairs.advanceweb.com> for more information. CE Sessions 8 AM to 3:30 PM. 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM at the Liacouras Center, 1776 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA
- **September 17** - RecruitMilitary Job Fair: A free hiring event for veterans who already have civilian work experience, men and women who are transitioning from active duty to civilian life, members of the National Guard and reserves, and military spouses. To register, visit <http://www2.recruitmilitary.com/expos/229-Pittsburgh/candidates/information>. 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Heinz Field, 100 Art Rooney Ave, Pittsburgh, PA
- **September 18** - National POW/MIA Recognition Day: National Day of Observance
- **September 19 & 20** - Serve & Protect Weekend at PA Renaissance Faire: 50% discount to all military and veterans during this weekend. For more information go to [www.parenfaire.com](http://www.parenfaire.com). 9:00 AM to 10:00 PM at the PA Renaissance Faire, 2775 Lebanon Road, Manheim, PA
- **September 21 to 24** - Willow Grove NAS Transition Assistance Class for Separating Military Personnel: Class is four days. Do not schedule any appointments during class time. All attendees must bring a copy of their orders and a completed DD2648 Pre-Separating Counseling Checklist. There must be 20 students to have a class. Please call (215) 443-6846 for more information or to reserve a seat for the class. 8:30 AM in Building 171A, NAS JRB Willow Grove, PA
- **September 23** - Allentown CareerLink Job Fair: For more information contact Carmen at 610-841-1028. 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Allentown Fairgrounds, AG Hall, 17th & Chew Streets, Allentown, PA
- **September 23** - Mega Career Fair: For more information, go to [www.philly.com](http://www.philly.com). 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at Lincoln Financial Field, 1020 Pattison Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
- **September 24 to 27** - Operation Rise and Conquer: For veterans of the U.S. armed forces who served in Iraq or Afghanistan. No cost for veteran and one guest. Contact Mandy Goff for more information at (205) 313-7437 or email [mandyg@lakeshore.org](mailto:mandyg@lakeshore.org). Event takes place at Lake Martin, Jackson Gap, AL
- **September 25** - USMCL Film Showing - "The Story of Ernie Pyle": A 45 minute biography film of Ernie Pyle, a reporter with the GI's during World War II. The film was made in the late 1990's and is one of the best biography films ever made. 6:30 PM at Camp Hill Methodist Church, 417 S 22nd St, Camp Hill. PA
- **September 26** - VVA Hamburg Golf Outing: "Celebrating Freedom" Golf Outing honoring our men & women in the military. See flyer for details and registration form. \$75 per golfer includes buffet food & beverages. Call Fred Heckmann for more information at (610) 944-0865 or email [vva131@hotmail.com](mailto:vva131@hotmail.com) Subject: Golf Question. 8:00 AM at Perry Pavilion, Perry Golf Course, 220 Zions Church Rd, Shoemakersville, PA

- **September 26** - Military Appreciation Day at Kennywood Park: Passes are \$13 each, open to military, family members, and retired military. Tickets must be purchased in advance and will not be sold at the park. Contact Linda Adams at (814) 676-5840 or email linda.j.adams@us.army.mil for tickets and more information. For park information go to www.kennywood.com. Kennywood Park, Pittsburgh, PA
- **September 26** - American Legion Riders Poker Run: Proceeds to benefit wounded warrior Jeremy Feldbush. \$15 per bike. For more information call (724) 433-8526. Starts at National Road Harley Davidson in Uniontown 10:00 AM to 12:30.
- **September 27** - Gold Star Mothers' Day: State recognized day of observance
- **September 30** - Wall Street Warfighters Breakfast: Tickets are \$50. Contact Bob DeSousa at (717) 648-8317 or email at bobdesousa@reharperassociates.com. 8:00 AM at 1 North Second Street, Harrisburg, PA
- **September 30** - Willow Grove NAS Disability Transition Assistance: This class will give information on submitting a VA application for disability benefits. Includes questions and assistance from a VA representative. Walk in, no appointments necessary. For more information, call (215) 443-6846. 10:00 AM in Building 171A, NAS JRB Willow Grove, PA



## The Marine Corps League of Harrisburg

**Invites You To A Free Special Showing of 3 Films by "Lou Reda Productions"**

Maker of over 500 films for the History, A&E, and Biography Channels. Recipient of the People's Choice & Peabody Awards, several Emmy's and The Marine Corps League of Naples 2007 "Honor the Free Press" award.

	<b>45 Minutes</b>	<b>September 11, 2009</b> <b>The USS New York</b>	<b>Camp Hill United Methodist Church</b>
Part of the Hero Ship series, this 45 minute film was made for the History International Channel. The bow of the ship was made with steel from the Twin Towers. A dramatic history of the old and the new, it will be used at the christening of the USS New York this coming summer. We are honored to present this film.			
	<b>70 Minutes</b>	<b>September 18, 2009</b> <b>The USO</b>	<b>Camp Hill United Methodist Church</b>
A 70 minute film, made at the request of General Carl Mundy, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps and then head of the USO, was shown in the late 1990's. It covers the birth of the "United Service Organization" (USO) to the present day and contains lots of old memories and new aspects of what the USO is doing for our military today.			
	<b>45 Minutes</b>	<b>September 25, 2009</b> <b>The Story Of Ernie Pyle</b>	<b>Camp Hill United Methodist Church</b>
A 45 minute biography film of Ernie Pyle, a reporter with the GI's during W.W. II. The film was made in the late 1990's and is one of the best biography films ever made.			

<p><b>Camp Hill Methodist Church</b> 417 S. 22nd St. Camp Hill, PA</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red;"><b>Walk In's Welcome</b></p> <p style="color: red;"><b>For Reservations</b> To reserve your seat call Bill at (717) 370-2128 between 5:30 &amp; 8:00 P.M. or contact us on the net at <a href="mailto:mclpwmilano@yahoo.com">mclpwmilano@yahoo.com</a>. List your name, address, and phone number</p>	<p>Doors open at 6:00 P.M. Program at 6:30 P.M. Plenty of parking Handicapped Accessible</p>
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