

** AT EASE **



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER



APRIL 2007

WATCHFIRE MAY 27, 2007

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER #103
P.O. BOX 675, LIVERPOOL, NY 13088
(315) 458-1323

2007

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Visit our website @www.cnyvva103.org
SYRACUSE VET CENTER 478-7127
BUFFALO VA REGIONAL OFFICE 1-800-827-1000

Presidents Message

For those of you who didn't attend our Installation and Awards Dinner on April 7th. I want you to know it was a very successful and enjoyable evening. We had over 130 people in attendance and had a good mix of members, politicians, friends and co-workers from the veteran's community. I want to recognize and applaud the efforts of our dinner chairman Dick Madden (incoming 1st. V.P.) and Program Book chairman John Lammana (Secretary) and Awards chairman Steve Van Camp for the many hours of personal time and effort they put into this event. The food was very good and generated many positive comments, the financial results of the Program Book were positive and the individual award plaques and certificates were proudly accepted by the recipients.

Our awards ceremony was conducted by Gordy Lane, and Awards Chairman Steve Van Camp. As each award was presented Gordy personalized it with a few words about the individual and exactly why the Chapter decided to present the individual with the particular award. Gordy and Steve then went on to present a number of Certificates of Appreciation to those people or organizations that have supported our efforts during the past year. I would like to comment here that a handful of folks mumbled the ceremony ran "bit long" even though we closed at 9:10 p.m. To those folks I would point out that the time taken to discuss the award and the recipient was needed to make the whole thing meaningful, how worthwhile would it have been to just call the name and hand out an award and quickly move on to the next.

Our annual Watch Fire ceremony is fast approaching on Sunday May 27th. I encourage each of you to attend and bring a neighbor. Food and non-alcoholic beverages will be available for sale and of course the parking is free. This event is becoming one of the biggest if not the biggest free Memorial Day celebrations in the community. Truly, something our chapter members should be proud of.

In closing I would like to personally say thank you to the Officers, Directors and Committee Chairmen who have volunteered their time and knowledge to help lead our Chapter forward in 2007-2008. I sincerely hope that we can generate some enthusiasm and get more people to come forward to help reinforce us to get the job done.

Ron Fairbank

April Notes

Our Chapter television program is on Wednesday nights at 6 p.m. on public access channel 98. Our media effort is ably led by Ron Fairbank and his superlative staff in the quest to bring veterans issues to the public and inform our extensive veterans community. The efforts of the staff are informative and educational - you would be well-served to watch a very good program.

The WA Installation Dinner was held at the Liverpool Elks Lodge on April 7, 2007. The dinner was attended by over 135 people. The food was excellent and the camaraderie was priceless. The individual efforts by many people made this installation dinner a success, and I'm sure this will continue to be so for a long time to come. The testimonies of many of the award winners were very moving and reflected their able efforts on behalf of the veterans they continue to serve.

I know it's early to be mentioning this (again), but our annual Watchfire will be on May 27th at the New York State Fairgrounds in the upper parking lot next to Rt. 690. The parking lot where it always takes place was renamed Veterans Memorial Watchfire Park last year, complete with our own engraved sign on State Fair Boulevard at the entrance leading up to the Watchfire. We are now an integral part of the Memorial Day celebration in Central New York and are officially recognized as such. We had over 10,000 people last year and expect to add significantly to that this year - thanks to you! From WWII to Iraq and Afghanistan - you can see them all here. The Watchfire will be lit shortly before dark, but please try to get there a few hours early so you can grab some decent parking spots. Our hotdog wagon will be cooking up lots of franks and coney dogs (my personal favorite) so be sure and stop by the wagon and load up on all them good dogs - they're the best around. Don't forget to bring your lawn chairs. Last year we had the world's largest collection of lawn chairs right here in Onondaga County - very cool. Please join us - and thank you for supporting our veterans.

The website of the New York State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America is www.nyvietnamvets.org.

Sue Doan, our State Veterans Counselor, has the following address:

Sue Doan
State Veteran
Counselor State Office
Bldg 4th Floor 333 E.
Washington St.
Syracuse, NY 13202

If any veteran has a question or problem that needs to be addressed, give Sue a call at 428-4046 at the State Office Building. She helped many veterans last year, especially through referrals from members of this chapter. The Iraqi/Afghan vets we've helped send to her are very thankful to Sue for watching out for them. They'll be at the

Watchfire,too.

Check this out - it was buried in the back pages of a newspaper. I couldn't believe it when I read it. Verbatim: Service members and their dependents could pay no more than 36% (!!!) annual interest on payday loans, vehicle title loans and refund anticipation loans under a preliminary draft of a rule intended to stop high interest loans to troops. Congress passed a law last year to limit interest charged to service members but left it up to the Pentagon to decide what loans would be covered under the new law. The Defense Department's draft proposal came as a relief to banks and lenders that had feared the law would be interpreted so broadly that it would include such common things as credit cards, overdraft protection on checking accounts and direct bill payments. The public will have sixty days to comment before the rule goes into effect October 1st. Since this article came out, the sixty days has passed. No mention of this was ever on the news. 36%. Nice.

PTSD watch: Last year, 216,000 veterans received compensation for PTSD. This figure excludes the 63,767 Afghanistan and Iraqi vets who sought psychological help from the VA and 29,041 with a preliminary PTSD diagnosis. The VA spends around \$10 billion annually on mental health benefits and services. (20% of front line troops in Iraq suffer concussions during combat tours.) That amount will expand significantly in the near term.

Editor's note: the second Thursday of each month is the cutoff for articles/information to be submitted for inclusion in the newsletter. My phone number is 635-2019; my email address is rmadden002@twcny.rr.com. Comments, suggestions and criticisms are welcome.

An Agenda for New York State's Veterans

New York State has 1.25 million citizens who have defended liberty and justice around their world through service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Our State also has 40,000 residents who currently serve in the armed forces. As veterans, you represent the highest ideals of our society — and you deserve a Governor who will advocate for you.

Our veterans face a variety of challenges. Many are suffering health problems from wounds — physical and psychological — that occurred in battle. Others are struggling to find a job, to get an education or even to find a home. And thousands of soldiers who are currently serving in the Middle East will experience many of these same challenges as they return home over the next several years.

But I can't even recall the last time Albany had a comprehensive policy to address the needs of our veterans. In fact, Albany has cut back on the number of counselors who help our veterans find the services they need, and the number of offices where veterans can go to access these services.

When veterans put on the uniform of one of the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, they're doing more than serving their country. They're serving their state, and their county, and the city or town they're from. It's time that New York had a governor who recognized that we have a fundamental obligation to those who have made that commitment, and that sacrifice — an obligation, as Abraham Lincoln said, "to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle."

During my time as attorney general, I proved my desire to fight for those who "have borne the battle." Recently, my office has helped counsel reservists on their legal rights relating to employment, even helping them win back pay in some instances. As governor, I will continue be a strong voice for New York's veterans.

I. Provide Leadership

- I will appoint a competent, activist veteran to head the NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs — someone who is in touch with the concerns of New York's veterans.
- I will also elevate the director of the state DVA to a cabinet-level position, because it's important that they "have my ear" on issues that affect our veterans.
- Many veterans have told me that the last administration depleted the ranks of the State DVA, so I will examine the mission and budget of the agency — taking an honest look at what must be done to provide our veterans with appropriate services and benefits.

II. Improve Benefits

- Over the last three years, State governments have expanded benefits for veterans through the Patriot Plans. But the system of benefits remains confusing to many veterans. That's why the State's veterans counselors are so important. The needs of

veterans and the landscape of benefits is always evolving, and I will ensure that our State's counselors are committed professionals who are equipped to assist our veterans in obtaining the benefits and services they need.

- Over the last 12 years, the state DVA has diminished its regional presence, which has been to the detriment of our state's veterans. I will explore ways to expand the DVA's regional presence.

III. Strengthen Outreach

- The state DVA can't serve our State's veterans effectively unless it maintains an ongoing dialogue with our diverse community of veterans. I will hold DVA officials accountable for reaching out to veterans, such as by inviting veterans all around the State to hearings and roundtables where we can discuss the challenges they face.
- I don't believe you can advocate for New York State's veterans effectively unless you understand the diversity of their ranks. Our State has many kinds of veterans, from retired career members of the armed forces to members of National Guard and Reserve units who were called up for active duty. We also have many female veterans and people of color who are veterans. Many veterans have told me that our state government serves some groups of veterans better than others. I will take steps to ensure that New York serves all groups of veterans effectively.
- As Governor, I will ensure that the State Division of Veterans Affairs develops a plan to address the needs of soldiers who are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. I will direct State DVA counselors to make follow-up contact with every soldier who returns to New York from overseas combat and to assist them with any of the problems they are facing. Counseling is the main service of the State DVA, but many returning vets do not know about the counseling service, or do not call until it is too late to avert a health crisis or prevent homelessness.

IV. Advocate for Veterans

- In addition to fighting in Albany for our State's veterans, I will take advantage of the New York State Governor's national profile to advocate for better federal services and benefits for all veterans. I will ensure that our State's veterans get their fair share of federal support and that our State maximizes federal resources.
- My Washington representatives and I will fight hard to make funding for the VA mandatory, and to ensure the VA has the resources it needs.

1. Staffing at Vet Centers lagging

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The number of returning Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans visiting Department of Veterans Affairs walk-in clinics has more than doubled since 2004, while the clinics' staff has increased by less than 10%, agency records show.

The clinics, known as Vet Centers, are meant to make it easier for combat veterans to receive help. Last year, 21,681 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans visited the centers, up from 8,965 in 2004. The number of clinic staff members rose from 992 to 1,063 during the same period, according to the VA records.

A VA survey of clinic team leaders that the agency provided to USA TODAY Thursday shows that 114 of the 209 Vet Centers need at least one extra psychologist or therapist to help with the influx of veterans. The VA is only slated to add 61 new staff.

Al Batres, the national director of Vet Center operations, says he will fill those additional slots over time. In addition, he says he has the budget to open 23 new centers across the country by September 2008, the end of the next budget year. He says the new centers will help serve the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

"My task is to try to direct the right kind of services at the right time to the right place," Batres said.

The VA has consistently underestimated the needs of many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, says Joe Davis, a spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"The Vet Centers are on the front lines," Davis says. "Every one of the 200-plus Vet Centers are providing a vital service, but our greatest concern is five years from now when more veterans and their families" enter the system.

The Vet Centers are small, storefront operations with a staff of four to five people each. The centers were created in 1979 to help Vietnam War veterans readjust to society. Services include combat stress counseling, marriage therapy, job assistance and medical referrals.

Five of the clinics in the VA survey said they have people waiting in line for service. An informal survey last year by House Democratic staffers of 60 centers found that all reported significant increases in demand and about 10 reported using group therapy sessions, rather than individual counseling, to handle the increase. In the VA survey, only two of the clinics said shortages led them to substitute group therapy for more appropriate individual counseling.

Among the findings in the VA survey:

- Twenty-six centers said it takes longer to help veterans because of the increased workload.
- Twenty-two centers reported they cannot provide family counseling when necessary.
- Fifty-four centers said more sexual trauma treatment is needed.

Batres has hired 100 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to help educate new veterans about services. Unlike clinic visits, which involve veterans meeting individually with staff members, many outreach efforts involve staffers speaking to groups of veterans.

Veterans of several wars use the centers, VA records show. In 2004, 125,737 veterans visited the centers or were contacted through outreach efforts; that number rose to 228,612 in 2006.

Last year, the White House proposed cutting \$47 million from the \$3.3 billion budget for veterans' readjustment benefits. Two congressional committees agreed, but the Republican-controlled Congress didn't pass a final spending bill. This year, Congress passed a resolution that keeps spending at the 2006 levels.

Posted 2d 20h ago

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MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART
CHARTERED BY U.S. CONGRESS
COMBAT WOUNDED VETERANS

FROM: JOHN DESPIRITO III
COMMANDER, MILITARY ORDER OF PURPLE HEART
CHAPTER 406

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MATERIAL CAN BE MAILED TO
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NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR
PO BOX 207
VAILS GATE, N.Y. 12584

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TEAM RED: (315) 425-4328

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Specialty Clinic (4W)	52316
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Women's Health Clinic	54652

Team Blue Fax (315) 425-2489

Team Red Fax (315) 425-4827

VAMC Toll Free 1-800 221-2883

<i>Department</i>	<i>Loc.</i>	<i>Ext.</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Loc.</i>	<i>Ext.</i>
ANGIOGRAPHY	B314	53696	LOW CHOLESTEROL	AC9	52431
ANESTHESIA	4W		MEMORY DISORDER	2W	52135
AUDIOLOGY	AG	56511	MENTAL HEALTH	7S	53463
BACK CLINIC	2W	52604	MRI-CHECK IN	3 RD FLOOR	
BLOOD DRAW	C100	52122	NEUROLOGY CL	2W	53474
BRONCHOSCOPY	4W		NUCLEAR MED	3E	52267
CARDIOLOGY	5E	52935	NUTRITION EDU.	AG6	54374
CARDIO CLINIC	2E	52160	OCCUPATIONAL	5W	52684
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CDC	7S	52718	ORTHOPEDIC	2W	52635
COLONOSCOPY	4W	52324	OUTPATIENT PROC	4W	
COMP & PEN	B200	52207	OPT SOCIAL WORKER	C168	54333
COUMADIN	2E	52615	PAIN BLOCK	4W	
DAV TRANSPORT	A168	54352	PHARMACY	C107	56505
DENTAL	B135	52090	PHYSICAL THERAPY	C503	52684
DERMATOLOGY	2E	52160	PODIATRY	2E	52160
DIABETES	AG9	52432	PROSTHETICS	A506	54695
DIALYSIS	B442	52328	PSYCHIATRY	7S	53463
DIET CLINIC	X261	52431	PULMONARY (PFT)	2E	54383
EEG/EMG	5E	52934	REHAB CLINIC	C503	52684
EKG	5 E	52935	RENAL CLINIC	2E	52160
ECHOCARDIO	5E	52511	RESP. THERAPY	CG19	52830
EMERGENCY	IS	52894	RHEUMATOLOGY	2E	52160
ENDOCRINE	2E	52160	SLEEP STUDY	2S	53290
ENDOSCOPY	B426	52332	SENIOR SOCIAL WORK	C109	54829
ENT	2W	52601	SPECIALTY CL	2 W	52611
ENVIRONMENT	A170	54822	STRESS TEST	5E	52240
EYE CLINIC	C210	53281	STROKE CLINIC	AC9	54320
GI	2E	52160	SURGICAL	2W	52601
GU	2W	52601	TEAM RED	1S	54828
GERIATRIC	2E	52160	TEAM BLUE	1E	56515
HEADACHE	2W	52135	THORACIC SURGERY	2W	52601
HEM/ONC	2E	53456	ULTRASOUND	3E	52234
HOLTER MONITOR	5E		UNNA BOOT	2W	52601
HBPC	B904	54302	UROLOGY	2W	52601
INFECT DIS	2E	52160	VASCULAR SURGERY	2W	52601
IMAGING (X-RAY)	3W	52232	VIST	C234	54381
INFUSION	4W	52330	WHEELCHAIR CL	C506	52684
			WOMEN CL	2E	54652

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER #103
P.O. BOX 675
LIVERPOOL, NY 13088**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Veterans must provide evidence of service (DD214 or Equivalent)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Veteran (Y) _____ (N) _____

Are you a Vietnam-Era Vet? (Y) _____ (N) _____

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VA Telecare, a service of the Syracuse VA Medical Center.

"Putting Veterans First"

To purchase hats, T-shirts, stickers, pins, etc. Go to:
Westvale Gardens
2400 West Genesee Street
Syracuse, NY 13209

And say "Hi" to Bill Martin!

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER #103
P.O. Box 675
LIVERPOOL, NY 13088

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VVA Chapter #103 holds its meetings at American Legion Post 188, 205 Cypress St., Liverpool, NY on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Directions: From Heid's Corners, follow signs to Rt. 370 (2nd Street). Take first left past Washington Park. The Post is on your right side, across from the park.