

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits you have earned is by visiting your local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org or on CalVet's website at www.cdva.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx



REMINDER

California Veterans to Have Full Access to Education Benefits Under New GI Bill



In a landmark agreement, a joint solution has been reached between the State of California and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) concerning the implementation of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill in California. Prior to this joint solution, the implementation of this measure prevented California veterans planning to attend private colleges and universities from receiving their full education benefits. This joint agreement reached between the CalVet, the USDVA and the University of California ensures eligible California veterans have access to the education benefits earned through their service to our country.

In April 2009, CalVet raised the Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition/fee issue with the USDVA. The practice of charging "fees" for attending California's public colleges and universities rather than charging "tuition" created a situation where veterans attending private institutions of higher learning

could not receive the full education benefits provided by the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefit authorizes the USDVA to pay the actual tuition and fees charged by a university up to the maximum in-state tuition and fees charged by the most expensive public university in the state. In interpreting the statute in its implementing regulation, the USDVA determined that it must set separate state maximums for tuition and fees, as opposed to a single combined total. In California, public schools have traditionally charged no tuition but relatively high fees. Thus a student attending a private school in California would receive much less of a basic tuition benefit under the Post-9/11 GI Bill program than students at private schools in other states.

Recently, California's public universities introduced a new billing

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Editor's Note:

Please enjoy the new look of the CalVet Newsletter. Share your thoughts with me at Jaime.Arteaga@cdva.ca.gov

CalVet Offices Closed **Three** Fridays Each Month

In light of the fiscal emergency California is in the midst of and in an effort to save money, Governor Schwarzenegger has issued Executive Order S-13-09, mandating that state offices be closed three Fridays each month.

In compliance with Executive Order S-13-09, CalVet Headquarters and District Offices will be closed three Fridays each month through June 2010. The specific dates offices will be closed are as follows:

August 2009 - 7th, 14th, & 21st
September 2009 - 4th, 11th & 18th
October 2009 - 2nd, 9th & 16th

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

CHULA VISTA

Veterans Home Of California, Chula Vista Team Garner Six Medals In 2009 VA Golden Age Games In Birmingham, Alabama

By John Farrell

Almost 700 senior veterans met on June 1st in Birmingham, Alabama for the 23rd Annual VA Golden Age Games. The five-day competition pitted veteran against veteran in a variety of events, ranging from checkers and dominoes, to such traditional events as discus and shot put. Golden Age Game contestants are classified according to their age and level of physical limitation, if any, and the event is held at a different location each year. The 2010 Golden Age Games will be in Des Moines, Iowa.

The Veterans Home of California, Chula Vista (VHC-CV) Team endured a long and tiring flight to Birmingham, and the big question upon arrival was whether to eat and then go to sleep, or just go to sleep. The spartan amenities of modern air travel left growling stomachs, so it was hot sandwiches in the hotel coffee



The Veterans Home of California, Chula Vista 2009 Golden Age Games Team Meets Before Departing for Birmingham. Back Row (L to R) Bob Sherwood, Assistant Coach José Bautista, Al Curtis, Dick Johnson, Richard Reese, and Dick Frost. Front Row (L to R) John Farrell, Bernard Gary, Richard Conway, Mike Gonzales, and Head Coach Michelle Scholl.

shop, then off to get some rest. Clocks in Birmingham run two hours ahead of ours here in California.

Registration took up much of Monday, June 1st with early dinner and spectacular opening ceremonies, featuring a soul-stirring performance of the National Anthem by a local pre-teen diva with a voice bigger than herself.

Competition began in earnest on Tuesday, and when the dust finally settled at the end of the week, June 5th, Richard Conway had a Silver Medal for Shuffleboard, Al Curtis earned a Silver Medal in the Air Rifle competition, and Richard Frost took the Silver Medal for Table Tennis. Bernard Gary won a Bronze Medal for

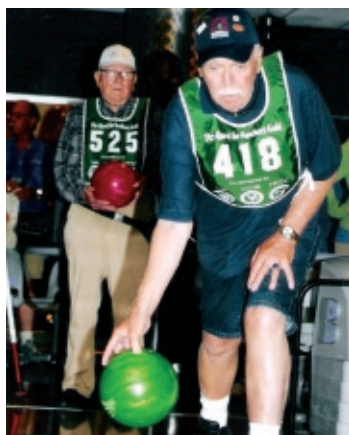
Checkers and Richard Reese was awarded two Bronze Medals, one for Checkers and the other for Croquet.

The City of Birmingham went out of

its way to make visiting Vets feel welcome the entire week of the Golden Age Games, with many of the local tourist attractions opening their doors to us for free. Some vets enjoyed the Barber Motorcycle Museum, with its multistory display of more than 1,100 motorcycles.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute extended free admission to 2009 Golden Age Game Vets. It provided deeply disturbing, yet richly rewarding insights into the history of race relations in America and of the painful and sometimes brutal progress of the Civil Rights Movement. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is located across the street from the 16th Street Baptist Church, the place of worship where one Sunday in 1963, four young girls lost their lives in the blast of a Ku Klux Klan bomb.

This year's Golden Age Games were well-organized and focused on providing a pleasant and satisfying experience for competitors, and with more than a



Richard Conway looks on as Dick Johnson steps into the bowling competition.

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

CHULA VISTA

Golden Age Games

◀ PG 2

thousand volunteers to help, staffing was never a problem.

Despite its status as the largest city in Alabama, Birmingham retains its charming, small-town flavor. Strangers smile and speak to you on the street, and the generic terms for out-of-state tourists seem to be “Darlin” and “Sweetie.” ★

VHC-CV Resident Richard Reese claims a Bronze Medal for Croquet at the 2009 Golden Age Games in Alabama.



VHC-CV Resident Mike Gonzales makes his move in the early round of Checkers at the 2009 VA Golden Age Games.



Bernard Gary heads for the hotel wearing the Bronze Medal awarded to him in the Checkers Competition.

Chula Vista Vets Home Vets Party On in Cinco de Mayo Fiesta!

In Southern California, Cinco de Mayo (5th of May in English) is an occasion to celebrate Mexican heritage, down a few Coronas, and ingest mass quantities of tortilla chips & guacamole. And that, except for the Coronas, is precisely what happened May 5th at the Veterans Home of California, Chula Vista.

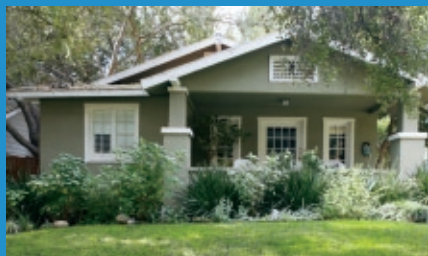
Any Cinco de Mayo fiesta without a Mariachi band can only be classified as a fraud, but this fiesta with its Mariachi was the real deal — two trumpets, a violin, a vihuela (a high-pitched, five-string guitar) and a guitarrón (a small-scaled acoustic bass).

Lively ranchero music from Mexico's State of Jalisco rang through the Main Dining Room as residents and staff members partied in full fiesta mode.

PG 5 ▶▶



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NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

CHULA VISTA

VHC-CV staffers dutifully "strut their stuff" in hopes of a telephone call from Simon Cowell.



Chula Vista Veterans Home Founders' Day Gala Hailed as Best Ever!

Veterans Home of California – Chula Vista residents and their guests had high praise for what many said was the best Founders' Day celebration in the nine-year history of the home.

It was a day for families and friends to celebrate the public spirit and will of the local few whose vision for a California Veterans Home in Chula Vista more than ten years ago is today a dream long since fulfilled. That dream remains a work in progress as renovation of resident living quarters moves ahead.

Fans of Annette Funicello and Paul Anka and other "oldies" reveled in the Beach Blanket Bingo theme of the event. Staff members produced a rocking and rolling all-female (almost) reincarnation of the Beach Boys, complete with some historically accurate choreography.

The Veterans Home population

nearly doubled for the day as local civic leaders and neighbors joined with the families of residents and employees for the party, with the little ones having a ball. The ever-popular air playhouse was in use the entire day, and the campus rang with the giggles and squeals of children at play. Many had their faces painted in various colors and motifs, ranging from beautiful princesses to scary crocodiles and dinosaurs.

Assembly Member Mary Salas was in attendance, as were Chula Vista Mayor Cheryl Cox and her husband, Greg Cox, Chairman of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. All three are long-time supporters of the Veterans Home.

The Home's standing alcohol ban was relaxed somewhat for the day, with beer and wine (2-drink limit) added to the usual beverage menu. Kitchen staff delivered the goods

with a splendid barbecue featuring many and varied choices. As a special blast from the past, Coca-Cola was served in the traditional hourglass six-ounce bottles of yesteryear. ★



Susan Shipp, Residential Care Unit Leader at VHC-CV, seems Nashville bound as she readies her guitar for action at the Founders' Day Party.



Food Service Manager Jim McCollom, of Morrison Catering, puts the corn to the coals during this year's Founders' Day festivities.

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NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

CHULA VISTA

Cinco de Mayo Fiesta!



VHC-CV resident Tom Casenza, sombrero in place, takes to the dance floor with his fiancée, Mrs. Virginia Muñoz-Alvarado, at the 2009 VHC-CV Cinco de Mayo party.

PG 3

But there is more to Cinco de Mayo than just a fiesta. The holiday commemorates the Battle of Puebla. On May 5, 1862, 4,000 ill-equipped Mexican troops went up against 8,000 well-armed and well-equipped French soldiers, members of an army, which had not been defeated in the field since the Battle of Waterloo some 50 years earlier. The outcome proved an upset. When the day was done, 462 French soldiers lay dead, while only 83 Mexicans lost their lives. The French were routed! But a single victory, no matter how glorious, does not win a war, and in the end, the French were successful in occupying the country for the next 3 years. ★

Happy Birthday Joan! Happy Birthday Army!

The U.S. Army's 234th birthday was June 14th. The Veterans Home of California-Chula Vista celebrated the Army's birthday on June 15th along with home resident Joan De Munbrun, who turned 96 that day.

Joan De Munbrun (née Schwochert), enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942. She was attached to the Army Air Corps at Eagle Pass, Texas, serving as a photographer and photographic laboratory technician. De Munbrun was then transferred to Lowery Field at Denver, where she served as an instructor on the maintenance and operation of the aerial camera.

After the war, De Munbrun attended photography school under the GI Bill. She later became a staff photographer for New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, N.M. She married, and has one son, Ronald De Munbrun. She also has three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

De Munbrun was employed for 25 years as an accountant with the World Wide Construction Company. After retirement, she took up painting and photography as hobbies. De Munbrun is, and for many years has been, actively involved in veterans' affairs. In 2003, the American Legion named her Legionnaire of the Year for the State of California. ★



VHC-CV resident Joan De Munbrun celebrates her 96th birthday.



Following long-established U.S. Army tradition, Joan De Munbrun, as senior veteran present, is joined by Army Sgt. Madrigal, the youngest veteran present, in cutting the birthday cake.

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

GLAVC

GREATER LOS ANGELES AND
VENTURA COUNTIES

Acting Secretary Roger Brautigan Visits **Ventura** Veterans Home

By Jeanne Bonfilio

On a recent trip to Southern California, Acting Secretary Roger Brautigan made an eagerly anticipated visit to one of the newest Veterans Homes of

California, located in the lovely coastal city of Ventura.

Although still under construction and expected to open this fall, the stunning facility looks picture perfect, thanks to the great work of Viola Construction Company and their construction manager Bob Gibbons. Acting Secretary Brautigan was very pleased with the progress and quality of the construction and workmanship that went into every detail of the Home. On hand to provide a personal tour were Brenda Manke, the Home's Administrator, and Louis Koff, Administrator for the new Veterans Home of California – West Los Angeles, also under construction and estimated to open in mid-2010. Chief of Plant Operations, Peter Cho, also lent his expertise to the tour.

"This new Veterans Home looks wonderful," said Brautigan. "And not just on the inside, but outside as well. The landscaping and the trees, everything is just beautiful."

Administrator Manke agreed, explaining that everyone could feel the beauty and warmth of the new Home and how each and every detail was built with the comfort of the veteran in mind. "It was with great



(L to R) West Los Angeles Veterans Home Administrator Louis Koff; Acting Secretary Roger Brautigan; and Ventura Veterans Home Administrator Brenda Manke.

pride that I was able to take Acting Secretary Brautigan through the Veterans Home and show him the wonderful craftsmanship and care that has been given in the day-to-day construction of the Home," explained Manke. Also contributing to the beauty of the outdoor space was Mr. Rolla J. Wilhite from Berylwood Tree Farms Nursery, who generously donated countless trees and plantings to enhance and beautify the picturesque grounds.

Before his trip back to Sacramento, Mr. Brautigan also spent some time visiting staff at CalVet's temporary offices in Van Nuys. There, he conveyed his appreciation to staff and stressed the importance of always striving to make meaningful improvements. "The Department's employees, each and every one of you, are so important to our mission," he said. "You are on the front lines, directly helping our veterans. And it is wonderful for all of us to be part of these exciting new Veterans Homes from construction to completion. I want to thank you for the great jobs you are all doing."★

Veterans Homes Staff Support San Diego Stand Down

By Jeanne Bonfilio

Staff from the Veterans Homes of California (VHC) participated in, and supported, the San Diego Veterans Stand Down July 18 and 19, the oldest and one of the largest Stand Down events in the state. Also lending his support at the event, held at San Diego High School, was Thomas Richards, California Veterans Board Member.

Veterans Stand Downs are events held throughout the state in different communities at which CalVet, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, local volunteers, non-profit organizations and community groups come together to provide services and assistance to homeless veterans. At these events, veterans are provided medical, dental and legal services, and they are also given a place to sleep and bathe and rest up for a couple of days.

CalVet staff on hand to provide additional support, California benefits information and fact sheets on the Veterans Homes of California, included: from VHC West Los Angeles were Louis Koff, Administrator and Joe Deas, Hospital General Services Administrator; from VHC Chula Vista were Jane Bergman, Administrator,

PG 8 ➤➤

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

GLAVC

GREATER LOS ANGELES AND
VENTURA COUNTIES

California Veterans Board Meets In Lancaster

By Jeanne Bonfilio

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) was honored to assist in hosting the highly-anticipated June 2009 meeting of the California Veterans Board and Veterans Affairs Forum. The City of Lancaster was very gracious in offering the Lancaster City Council Chambers for the meeting, which is just up the street from the William J. "Pete" Knight Veterans Home of California – Lancaster. The community where the newest Veterans Home of California is being constructed is home to beautiful and relaxing desert landscapes. Each season, the City of Lancaster hosts nearly 100 athletic programs,



(L to R) Brenda Manke, Lisa Grod, J. P. Tremblay, Louis Koff, Mrs. William J. "Pete" Knight and Acting Secretary Roger Brautigan.

community classes, art exhibits and special events, as well as maintaining eleven city parks.

During the CalVet Board meeting, the Strategic Plan, admissions policy for the Veterans Homes of California, and the GI Bill were just some of the many items discussed. In addition to staff, also in attendance were Colonel Tom Craft, U. S. Navy (Ret.), Colonel Joseph N. Smith, USMC (Ret.), Robert Ortiz, Los Angeles County Veterans Services Officer, Steve Rosmarin, Past Department Commander, California



California Veterans Board Chair Alice Astafan, left, meets Mrs. William J. "Pete" Knight.

Jewish War Veterans, and Mrs. William J. "Pete" Knight.

What also made this meeting special was that all CalVet Board members, as well as Acting Secretary Roger Brautigan and Deputy Secretary for External Affairs JP Tremblay, were escorted on a special walkthrough of the new veterans home by Administrator Lisa Grod. The beautiful new facility, which has received endless support from high-desert communities, is progressing well and estimated to open this fall. ★

Camarillo Quilters Support Veterans Home Of California—Ventura

By Jeanne Bonfilio



The Camarillo Quilters' patriotic quilts of red, white and blue will warm the hearts of deserving Veterans.

Those who sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket of love, so the old saying goes. That beautiful adage could not be truer of the breathtaking and intricate quilts made by hand with tender loving care by the many members of the Camarillo Quilters for the future veteran residents of the Veterans Home of California – Ventura. The group also donates quilts to many

other wonderful organizations.

Rose Ann Klope, representing Camarillo Quilters Association, invited Administrator Brenda Manke to join her and the crafty quilters at their June 9 meeting to personally observe the work of 300 members. Manke could feel the love that went into every stitch of nearly 90 handmade quilted masterpieces, many with patriotic designs, that were on display and will be donated to the new Veterans Home of California – Ventura during the grand opening ceremony this fall. "The love

PG 9 >>>

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

GLAVC

GREATER LOS ANGELES AND
VENTURA COUNTIES



Just some of the dedicated men and women members of the Veterans of Foreign War Department of California at their annual convention in Ontario.

Calvet Staff Support Veterans Of Foreign Wars Convention

By Jeanne Bonfilio

Amid the Color Guard, the American flags and colorful Garrison caps were nearly 1,000 proud and brave members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Department of California, at their Annual Convention at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario on June 20. After the Call to Order by Everett Martin, VFW Convention Chairman, and a lovely invocation by Department Chaplain Ed Ford, soloist Lynda Smith, sang a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem.

Jack Kirwan, CalVet Chief of Administrative Services, expressed his appreciation to all members of the VFW and spoke eloquently about CalVet's services and benefits. He also brought to everyone's attention the Veterans Resource Book, a highly sought-after reference guide, produced by CalVet, and one of the newest information books available for veterans. The new Veterans Reintegration Program was also a topic of his speech, recommending that all veterans sign up to ensure that they receive the California benefits they so richly deserve. Through this new program, Veterans

can request information on California state benefits, Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise, college fee waiver for dependents, employment, education, healthcare, transportation, CalVet Home Loans, legal and financial assistance, Women Veterans Roster, compensation and pension benefits, Veterans License Plate Program, Agent Orange, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and Veterans Homes of California.

A strong sense of camaraderie,

patriotism and friendship filled the convention auditorium and memories and support were shared by all. In an adjacent auditorium, CalVet staff provided information on the new Veterans Homes of California for Greater Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, as well as information on Veterans Homes already in operation in Yountville, Barstow and Chula Vista. Also distributed were veterans benefits brochures and new Network of Care leaflets. Other Veteran Service Organizations and vendors were also on hand.

CalVet sincerely thanks each and every one of the 2.2 million Veterans of Foreign Wars for their dedicated service. It was an honor and pleasure for CalVet staff to attend this annual event. The wonderful and moving convention concluded when the audience joined in as soloist Lynda Smith sang "Proud to Be an American," one of the many highlights of the memorable day. ★

Stand Down

★ PG 6

Jim Miller, Skilled Nursing Facility Manager and Dr. Paul Wagner, Chief Medical Officer, Brenda Yarbrough, Personnel Specialist, and Debbie Priess, Office Technician. After several moving speeches, Congressman Bob Filner, 51st District, held a press conference to speak further on the plight of homeless veterans. Also present and showing their support were Assembly Member Mary Salas, 79th District, San Francisco Mayor Gavin



At the Veterans Stand Down, VHC Barstow staff members Brenda Yarbrough and Debbie Priess provide CDVA information to veterans in need.

Newsom, and other local elected officials.

A Veterans Stand Down was also held in Ventura at the National Guard Armory from July 24 – 26, 2009. ★

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

GLAVC

GREATER LOS ANGELES AND
VENTURA COUNTIES

Quilters

◀ PG 7

and care that the Camarillo Quilters put into the making of these quilts will warm the bodies and souls of our home members," Manke said.

It was quilter Denise McConica who first brought the idea of crafting quilts for the future Veterans Home members to the attention of the group, explained Klope. "After she brought the idea to us, there was such a big response that instead of 60 quilts, one for each veteran, we now have over 90!" she added enthusiastically. A special label of love will be attached to each one. The labels were designed and created by quilter Jane Aiello. They read,

"Thanks and appreciation for your service and dedication to our nation. Sincerely, Camarillo Quilters."

It has been said quilts are like friends. They are a great source of comfort and warmth. What great friends the veterans have in the Camarillo Quilters! ★



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VETERANS HOMES STATISTICS

JULY 31, 2009

	Chula Vista	Barstow	Yountville
Domiciliary	108	109	639
Residential Care for the Elderly	29		43
Skilled Nursing	151	22	157
Intermediate Care		57	146
Memory Care			60

NEWS FROM OUR veterans homes

YOUNTVILLE

Freedom Team Salute

On July 13, 2009, all 960 Veterans Home Employees received a Freedom Team Salute Commendation Packet, which included individually imprinted packets containing an official U.S. Army Lapel pin, an official Army decal, a Certificate of Appreciation signed by both the Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army, and a letter of thanks signed by both the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army. Staff and members received these

commendation packets as a thank you for their service.

The Yountville Army Veterans were also honored back in November as part of our Veterans Day Celebrations. Major General (Ret) Ron Markarian and Colonel (Ret) Billie Miller presented Freedom Team Salute Commendation Packets to our Army veterans. There are approximately 300 Army veterans living in the home. Additionally a plaque with a Certificate of

Appreciation was presented to the Home's Administrator, Marcella McCormack, for the home's outstanding service and support of the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

A special thanks goes out to Steve Schilling, Special Representative at the Veterans Home of California – Yountville, for initiating this program for both residents and staff. ★



Roots & Raves

Speak
your mind,
we're
listening.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION
SUBMITTED BY EMPLOYEES

When Baggy Clothes Don't Hide The Fact One Is Obese Last Of Three Parts

By Jaime Arteaga

In the previous article I left the story at the point where I went under the effects of the anesthesia on the day of my gastric bypass.

I awoke shortly after 5:00 p.m., but only for a few seconds. I could sense someone was standing by my bed. Barely opening my eyes I saw one of my sisters and a niece smiling at me. I remember saying “hi” and then going back into a deep sleep. I don't recall feeling any major pain, just not being able to freely rearrange myself in the hospital bed.

It must have been a couple of hours later when I once more opened my eyes and found family members standing by my bed. Every one of them had questions, but all I could do was smile. Within a couple of minutes I closed my eyes and fell back into a deep sleep. In the deep fog I found myself in, I remember the nurse checking my vitals and family members rubbing my feet.

It wasn't until approximately 2:00 a.m. that I finally awoke and was completely aware of what I had been through the last 20 or so hours. The actual incisions didn't hurt, but my stomach muscles felt like I had done a couple thousand sit-ups. I thought that I should get up to go to the bathroom, since I knew I had not gone since the night before, but then discovered I was wearing a catheter and simply relaxed and tried to fall back asleep. This time sleep evaded me and I became aware that there was another patient in the bed next to mine. Poor guy, from what I was able to hear, he was there to have a foot amputated, but the doctor had been extremely busy and had postponed his operation time and time again that day. I felt sorry for

In spite of all the difficulties I encountered, I only wish I had done this sooner. I am now living, as opposed to just being.

the gentleman because he had not eaten or drank anything for more than 36 hours.

I tried reaching for the television remote control, but found I could not because of my sore stomach muscles. So I lay in bed and watched Hogan's Heroes without any sound.

It's funny how the soundtrack I invented was dirtier and funnier than what the actual soundtrack must have been. By playing this little mental game, I passed the time until 6:00 a.m. when the nurse told me I had to get up and walk. Good luck with that, I thought. I struggled on my own, but didn't even manage to get my feet off the bed, so the nurse helped me to stand. It took lots of courage to take the first step, but I did it, and thus began my first post-operative walk. Needless to say, it didn't go quite as I had hoped. I must have gotten ten yards out of my room when I felt like vomiting because the room was wildly spinning. The nurse led me back to bed where I sat for a few minutes chewing on crushed ice, which seemed to calm my stomach.

At 9:00 a.m. a second nurse encouraged me to try and walk again and this time I successfully navigated the circumference of the ward. In fact, the nurse kept telling me to slow down. The rest of the day was spent waiting for my

PG 12 >>

PG 11

doctor to release me. It seems he was extremely busy because he didn't come see me until around 4:00 p.m. "You are doing fabulous," he said. "Once you drink 10 ounces of water you will be free to go. I'll give the order to release you so you can go home and rest." That sounded easy enough, but drinking those 10 ounces of water took me the rest of the afternoon. Finally, after having the catheter removed and taking forever to dress in baggy sweats, my sister, who had spent the afternoon with me, called for an orderly to take me to my car. As I reached the car I realized I had just spent 36 hours in the hospital. Boy, was I glad to be going home.

The first 3 days after surgery were the toughest. I needed help getting off the couch, since sleeping on my bed was nearly impossible. But things improved dramatically by the 4th and 5th days. The next big hurdle was drinking my protein drinks, water, liquid soups, and gelatin in the required amounts at the required times. When your stomach is the size of your thumb, it takes discipline to eat and drink slowly and carefully. By the 7th day after surgery I decided to take my first walk around the neighborhood. I got about halfway around the block before needing to go back home to catch my breath. I kept working on my walks twice a day until I managed to walk the three blocks to the nearest supermarket to buy a few groceries. For the first few months, one is not allowed to lift or

carry more than 10 pounds.

Progress after my surgery was both rapid and nothing short of amazing. By the time I came back to work I had lost a total of 30 pounds and was walking approximately 20 minutes twice a day. I even started taking the stairs when going to different offices around the building. In terms of my eating, I now try to eat between 60 and 80 grams of protein each day, as well as drinking at least 60 ounces of liquid. Yes, I said liquid. Decaffeinated coffee and tea, milk, and soups are all sources of water our bodies can use. On top of this I drink one or two protein drinks daily, which consist of at least 45 ounces of water, a heaping scoop of protein powder, and Crystal Light, when taking my walks around the neighborhood. For the record, I am now walking between four and five miles 4 or 5 days a week.

It is now approximately eight months since my surgery and my total weight loss so far is 85 pounds. Although I should lose between 95 and 120 pounds over the course of the first year, I am happy where I am for the time being.

In terms of changes in my life, all I can say is that I am so glad I decided to take steps to tackle my weight problem. In spite of all the difficulties I encountered, I only wish I had done this sooner. I am now living, as opposed to just being. It is an amazing feeling being able to go into any store and purchase clothes off-the-rack. That is, of course, before my salary dropped to 1999 levels. Before my surgery, the only things I could wear from Macy's were cologne, sunglasses, and ties. I no longer worry if the chairs in restaurants will break or if I will fit in a booth. I no longer fall back into my car seat when trying to get out, but simply stand and close the door. I no longer feel invisible when in a public

setting. I am now seen and acknowledged. But most importantly, I am happy with my body. It is no longer my prison and enemy.

I know that I will have to watch what I eat for the rest of my life, but any person who chooses to be healthy does the same. I have given up carbonated drinks and caffeine for life, but that is a small price to pay for feeling so great. I know that exercise is not something to dread but something to embrace, because it just makes me feel good. Food is something I must eat to stay alive and active, not my source of comfort. If I want to eat something, anything, no matter the calorie content, I simply tell myself that it is okay to enjoy it, as long as I only take enough for a good taste. After all, the first and last bites of something are the best.

Finally, some folks have told me that I took the easy way. I assure you, there is nothing easy about what I have gone through and will go through for the rest of my life. I know I risked death but being obese was not living anyway. To anyone considering taking steps to improve their lives via weight loss surgery, I say, we only get one life; it is such a pity having to live only half of it because of obesity. I have chosen to live and now want it all or nothing. What I have done may not be for every fat person. I do believe some folks are happy being obese, and the beauty is that there is nothing wrong with that.

My journey has just begun and I am so excited about seeing where it takes me. Only this time, the extra baggage I carry is folded neatly inside a suitcase. ★

Employees are encouraged to submit articles to the editor, Jaime.arteaga@cdva.ca.gov

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UPCOMING events



AUG 09

AUGUST 12-13

CalVet Board Meeting
Burbank, CA
Contact: Bonnie Kelly
(916) 653-2041

AUGUST 21-23

Yuba-Sutter Stand Down
Marysville, CA
Contact: Marvin King
(530) 749-4967
mking@co.yuba.ca.us
www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/StandDown.aspx

SEP 09

SEPTEMBER 11-12

2009 CalVet Women Veterans
Conference
Sheraton Gateway Los Angeles Hotel
Los Angeles, CA
Contact: Yvette Kelley
(916) 653-2192
www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/WVConferences.aspx
Please see end of newsletter for
more information regarding this
event.

SEPTEMBER 12-14

6th Annual City of Compton
Homeless Veterans Stand Down
Compton, CA
Contact: Ivan Mason
(310) 868-5130, ext. 3009
www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/StandDown.aspx

SEPTEMBER 18-20

Sacramento Homeless Veterans
Stand Down
Sacramento, CA
Contact: Alex Briones
(916) 641-7599
vnvbatca@yahoo.com
www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/StandDown.aspx

OCT 09

OCTOBER 30

CalVet Secretary's Conference
CalVet Headquarters
Sacramento, CA
Contact: JP Tremblay
(916) 653-2192



in other news...

Remembering a Veteran, Honoring a Brother California Commemorates Contributions of Latino Veterans

By John Ochoa
California Mexican American
Veterans Memorial and Beautification
Committee

Stephen Rivera, a Vietnam War Veteran, died on May 9, 2008, in Sacramento, California. His family and friends recall that each year on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, Stephen led the Color Guard honoring Latino Veterans at the California Mexican American Veterans Memorial across the West steps of the State Capitol. This past Memorial Day, Stephen's family and friends gathered at the State Capitol to honor and remember his contributions to his country and his support of veterans and the California Mexican American Veterans' Memorial.

On October 30, 1963, Stephen joined the US Army. He loved the military and served two tours of duty in Vietnam. His family reports that he was awarded the Silver Star for Bravery in Action; the Bronze Star with Valor Device for valor while in combat, the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Combat Infantryman's Badge for service in combat, and was a proud member of the 101st Airborne Division and the elite US Army Rangers. Not bad for a kid from Sacramento who spent many hours volunteering in the community, from cleaning the local Catholic school and church to feeding the homeless. Steven always gave life his all, for both as a civilian and as a soldier he did not hold back.

After his first tour of duty in Vietnam, Stephen came home to find that his brother Frank had orders to go to Vietnam. Frank was married with children. Stephen did not want his brother to be placed in harm's way with the possibility of leaving his children fatherless. His sisters recall that he loved his brother and nieces and nephews so much that he lobbied Senator Alan Cranston and Congressman John Moss to reverse his brother's order to Vietnam, and instead, send him for his second tour of duty.

Stephen completed his military service in January 1971. When he returned home he did not become an ordinary citizen. He became an extraordinary veteran who always put veterans first. He was a founding member of the United Brotherhood of Vietnam Veterans, an organization that was a vital force in providing financial support for the construction of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Annually, the United Brotherhood participates in the Native American Blessing Ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the reading of names each Veterans Day.

Family and friends have sponsored small community fundraisers to carry on Stephen's support of the California Mexican American Veterans Memorial. Passing by the memorial today one would have a hard time knowing that the lone soldier or 'El Soldado' as it is known, commemorates the valor and sacrifice of Latino veterans.



Redondo Beach Veterans Memorial Task Force Needs Your Help

The Redondo Beach Veterans Memorial Task Force needs your help to construct a memorial honoring the service of our nation's veterans. The Task Force was organized following the approval of a conceptual design by the City Council of Redondo Beach to develop a park memorial. The cost to complete the memorial, which will be located in Veterans Park in Redondo Beach, is estimated to be \$250,000. At this time, they are more than halfway to their goal and are enlisting your assistance to finish this honorable endeavor. With your help, this memorial will become a reality!

For more information regarding this veterans memorial, please visit the Redondo Beach Veterans Memorial Task Force website at www.RBVeteransMemorial.com, where you will find a wealth of information about the planned memorial and instructions on how you can contribute. Feel free to contact Ernie O'Dell at (310) 318-0652 with any questions or if you desire additional information. ★

in other news...

Veterans Memorial Rendering Finished By Sonora Artist Gereon Rios, MFA

Local artist, Gereon Rios, has released his rendering of the Veterans Memorial which will be built at the currently-being-constructed Veterans Affairs Sonora Medical Clinic (part of the Palo Alto Health Care System). The Memorial will honor all veterans from the five military services and the Merchant Marines.

The Veterans Memorial is being financed by donations for commemorative bricks and pavers, which will pave the walkway from the front door of the Clinic to the Memorial. A 4x8-inch brick donation is \$50 and an 8x8-inch paver donation is \$100. It is an opportunity to honor any veteran's service. Brick and paver donation forms are available at various locations throughout the County or may be obtained through Chapter 391's web



site at www.VietnamVeterans391.org.

Limited editions of the artist's rendering are also available for purchase by the public. Each edition will have a run of 500 copies only and will be numbered and signed by Gereon Rios. The 16-7/8x12-inch, color laser print will sell for \$20 and the 12x18-inch color laser print, which will also feature a picture of the building site (the Clinic), the sculptor's originating idea of the Memorial, and will be personally dedicated to the patron, will sell for \$25.★

Offices Closed

◀ COVER

November 2009 - 6th, 13th & 20th

December 2009 - 4th, 11th & 18th

January 2010 - 8th, 15th & 22nd

February 2010 - 5th, 12th & 19th

March 2010 - 5th, 12th & 19th

April 2010 - 2nd, 9th & 16th

May 2010 - 7th, 14th & 21st

June 2010 - 4th, 11th & 18th

We apologize for any inconvenience this causes our veterans, their families, and our other customers. CalVet will be open during normal business hours during the rest of each month's workdays.

Stakeholders are invited to visit

CalVet's website at www.calvet.ca.gov which provides a wealth of information or to call 800.952.5626 for assistance. Thank you for your patience in this fiscal emergency.

The Governor's Executive Order may be viewed at

<http://gov.ca.gov/executive-order/12634/>. ★



Latino Veterans

◀ PG 14

The World War II Era statue stands alone with no prominent memorial name or historical narrative to describe the contribution of Latino veterans. Around it we find only grass, which makes it difficult to view the statue up close, especially for the disabled. In short, the statue stands alone and is in need of beautification and enhancement to bring it up to the architectural level of other memorials at our State's Capitol.

To continue Stephen Rivera's support of veterans, his family encourages all California families to support the beautification of the California Mexican American Veterans Memorial at the State Capitol. It was his wish that the Memorial take its proper place among the other historic commemorations of California's history. Donations in support of the Memorial are tax deductible and may be made online at www.mexicanamericanveteransmemorial.ca.gov or mailed to:

California Mexican American
Veterans' Memorial
c/o California Department of
Veterans Affairs
1227 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

in other news...

New GI Bill

◀ COVER

line item, "Educational Fee/Tuition." The USDVA has determined that, under its existing regulations, the Department can consider this new billing line item as "tuition" for the purpose of calculating the state's maximum payments. In California alone, approximately 80 schools have entered into more than 235 agreements for the 2009-2010 school year. The new maximum, in-state tuition amount for California public institutions is now \$287 per credit hour.

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. Private institutions can contribute up to 50 percent of those expenses, and the USDVA will match this additional funding for eligible students.

The Yellow Ribbon program is reserved for veterans eligible for the New Post-9/11 GI Bill at the 100 percent benefit level. This includes those who served at least 36 months on active duty or served at least 30 continuous days and were discharged due to a service-connected injury.

Additional information about the New Post-9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon program, as well as the USDVA's other educational benefits, can be obtained by visiting the USDVA's Web site www.gibill.va.gov or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551). ★



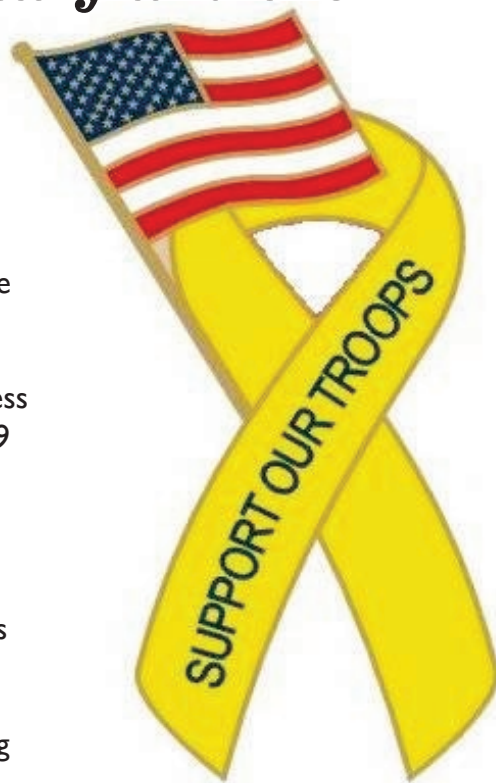
Uniting Communities to assist America's Military and their Families

By Brad White
National Chairman
Yellow Ribbon America

The State Capitol Award Ceremony on June 24, 2009 for the 2009 Outstanding Support for California's Military Members and their Families Award Event and Press Conference was amazing. The 2009 Award was designed to recognize and honor America's cities, local businesses, organizations and individuals who have made tremendous personal contributions on a consistent basis to help their local military members and their families in their communities during wartime.

We had the opportunity to recognize and award many selfless people, businesses, local governments and community organizations from all over California. We wish to congratulate and thank you all once again for your heartfelt help and support of California's military members and especially their families with our State Christmas and other Community Support Drives.

Yellow Ribbon America is a proud National Community Outreach Partner for the Defense Department's "America Supports You" and Military Severely Injured Center's "Heroes to Hometowns" programs. America Supports You spotlights efforts by American citizens and industries to support the nation's men and women in uniform. Heroes to Hometowns is designed to welcome home Service Members who, because of injuries sustained, can no longer serve in the military. In



creating a positive transition home, Heroes to Hometowns inspires community growth and establishes a support network for Service Members and their families that allow them to ease into their hometown or new surroundings. The Yellow Ribbon America Community Outreach Campaign for America's Military & their Families is a sponsored project of the America's Heroes Foundation. The America's Heroes Foundation is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit; Veterans Organization as defined under Sections 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code Tax ID# 59-3830542. For more information visit the YRA's website at www.YellowRibbonAmerica.org. ★

"IN THEIR OWN WORDS"

Annette Foster & Harris Jones

Hello and Good Morning:

Me and my fiancé, Harris Jones are both Disabled Veterans - I am 30%, but I have been working as a LVN/LPN, but my license needs to be renewed, and I don't have the money for it and I have been here since March 15, and still unable to get a job or a place to live. I stay on and off at my daughter's home and in my car, but soon it will be just my car, due to she is moving and I don't want to continue being a burden on her and my grandchildren. Harris is 60% disabled, and on SSD and he is unable to work due to his health problems, and he has been down here since May 1.

We had some money to move in a place, but were unable to find a place, this is due to me and Harris both have bad credit, and I just learned that I have an eviction on me that I did not know about and Harris has a misdemeanor on his record. We has been going to so many places trying to get a places and paying the app fee and credit check fee with the promise that they will work with us, and they turn around and said sorry and keep the money. And so now we are out of money, to move in Harris has \$40 left for gas for his car and mine.

We just need someone to rent a place to us and give us a chance to prove we are good tenants, that we just made some mistakes in the past.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and we would be so happy and blessed for any help.

Harris Jones/Annette Foster

RESULTS

- The Veterans Community Support Network paid for Annette's LVN/LPN license renewal.
- The Soldiers' Angels Project contacted the USDVA at Mather so they could get in touch with Annette to help her complete an application for an LVN job there.

The Soldiers' Angels Project helped with the housing issue. As of June 3, 2009, Annette and her fiancé moved into a 1 bedroom apartment, have a telephone, and were expecting a nursing license in the mail.

Richard Brown

I am writing this letter to express my sincere gratitude to the Veterans Community Support Network (VCSN) for two reasons. First, for paying \$53.75 for round-trip train tickets to San Quentin State Prison for me to interview with the State of California for a position as a Staff Services Budget Analyst. I did not have any other means of getting to this job interview at San Quentin, therefore; without Adonna Selby of Veterans Resources providing your information and moral support and encouraging me to "keep the faith" during this severely tough job market, I do not believe I would have made it to another job interview. Thanks again to Jan Wald for her speed in handling this important business situation.

Second, I am indebted to the Veterans Community Support Network due to the fact that I was hired by the State of California on 28 May 2009 in the Employment Development Department in San Jose. It was this agency that paid for my transportation to San Jose on 11 May 2009 for the Employment Program Representative job vacancy. I began work on 8 June 2009 and I am excited to begin my career with the State of California. However, I will desperately need expedited financial assistance in relocation and housing due to the fact that I will not get my first paycheck until the end of June from the State. I hope that this agency will be able to once again help me in this critical situation.

I hope that other veterans are able to achieve their goals of employment, education, and in other areas with the aid of this vital non-profit agency. Thanks for caring, believing, and supporting military veterans in the civilian world. I salute you!

Thanks sincerely,
Richard Brown

A FOLLOW-UP FROM RICHARD

I would like to say "Thanks A Million" to everyone associated with VSN for helping me get some financial aid in my relocation efforts to San Jose. This will help me tremendously in getting a place to live in San Jose. I just received a prayer from a stranger, which gave such incredible inspiration to me that I now feel with that prayer and VSN'S charity/loan I will be successful in finding a place to live and begin working for EDD in San Jose on 8 June 2009.

VETERAN REINTEGRATION PROJECT

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
1227 O STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814



WWW.CALVET.CA.GOV

MILITARY VETERANS BENEFITS

Mail or fax the completed form below to find out more information regarding your veteran benefits.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
VETERAN REINTEGRATION PROJECT



VETERAN INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

First Name

MI

5

Last Name

Mailing Address after Separation

City

State

Zip Code

Email

Branch of Service

Telephone

Year of Discharge

My concerns/priorities include:

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| ☐ State Benefits | ☐ Healthcare | ☐ CalVer Home Loans | ☐ Agent Orange | ☐ Veterans License Plate Program |
| ☐ Vet Homes | ☐ Employment | ☐ Legal Assistance | ☐ DD 214 | ☐ Compensation & Pension Benefits |
| ☐ Financial Assistance | ☐ Transportation | ☐ OEF / OIF Veterans | ☐ Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise | |
| ☐ Education | ☐ Women Veterans Roster | ☐ TBI / PTSD | ☐ College Fee Waiver for Dependents | |

I request and authorize release of the above information to the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the Employment Development Department. I certify that this request has been made freely, voluntarily, and without coercion and that the information given above is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand this information shall be used solely for outreach and to assist me to receive my veteran benefits and shall not be subject to public disclosure. **NOTE:** Out of state veterans information will be forwarded to their State's Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Signature: _____

Date: / /

MAIL TO:

VETERANS SERVICES DIVISION

1227 O Street, Room 105
Sacramento, CA 95814

OR FAX:

(916) 653-2563

PROJECT: GOLD STAR NEEDS **YOUR** HELP

Memorial Day was observed a few months ago, but its significance and sacredness never should, nor should we ever let the memory of our fallen drift away. To ensure that their sacrifice, and that of their families, will always be remembered, "Project: Gold Star" was launched. In November 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 1455 – the Gold Star Family License Plate Bill authored by Senator Dave Cogdill of Modesto. This bill authorizes a uniquely designed special license plate for families whose loved one is killed while serving on active duty in the military. The start-up costs for this license plate however - estimated to be approximately \$300,000 - must not impact the state's general fund and, therefore, must be raised from private sources.

To date, we have received only \$16,611 in donations. This is why we need your help. In spite of these difficult economic times we are asking that you find a way to donate to this most worthy and important cause. Whether you send a few dollars, a few hundred or a few thousand, all donations are welcome and will propel us to our goal. Your donations are tax deductible and you will receive a receipt and a thank you letter for your contribution. A donation form is available on the next page of this newsletter or on our website:

www.calvet.ca.gov. As well, you can call us at (916) 653-2192 and we will mail one to you.

We can think of no better way to both sanctify the sacrifice of our fallen heroes and honor the families whose lives were changed forever than by getting these Gold Star License plates produced.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Public Affairs at (916) 653-2192 if you have questions regarding Project: Gold Star.

Please see the attached Donation Form.

Project: Gold Star Donations to Date

GOLD (\$5,000 - \$14,999)

Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of CA
California VetFund

SILVER (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

American Legion Post #287
Roger & Arvie Brautigan
American Legion Post #43

BRONZE (\$100 - \$999)

Disabled American Veterans Chapter #28
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #5689
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #9946
Thomas & Betty Johnson
Gerald Yamamoto
Stockton Marine Corps Club
Horst Laube
John Kirwan
Alice Astafan
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #5991
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #10110
American Legion Post #172

COPPER (\$50 - \$99)

Lt. Demora Nicole Wright
American Legion Post #755
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #1525

CONTRIBUTORS (\$1 - \$49)

Kenneth W. Lark
Marlow Benner
Mitch Silberman
Dr. MaryAnn Poole

TOTAL TO DATE: \$16,611

Project: Gold Star Donation Form

I pledge to support Project: Gold Star



Please complete this section or attach a business card.

Name: Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Name of donor(s) as it should be acknowledged: _____

Enclosed is a donation of: \$ _____

Payment Options:

I would like to donate via credit card:

Bankcard Account Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Amount: \$ _____ MasterCard ___ Visa ___

Cardholder Name (please print): _____

Cardholder Signature: _____ Date: _____

I pledge \$ _____ over a _____ year period.

My first pledge payment of \$ _____ is enclosed.

Please mail a pledge reminder to me: annually ___ monthly ___ quarterly ___
semi-annually ___ other _____

I would like to contribute a gift in-kind: _____

Memory/Honor:

My donation is in memory of: _____

My donation is in honor of: _____

Please mail an acknowledgement to: (name) _____

(address) _____

Public Recognition:

Acknowledge this commitment? Yes ___ No ___

Signature

Date

Please make checks payable to the
CDVA Project: Gold Star and return or
fax this completed form to:

Project: Gold Star
1227 O Street, Room 300
Sacramento, CA 95814
(P) (916) 653-2192
(F) (916) 653-2611



CalVet Women Veterans Conference 2009

***Continuing Our
Legacy: Telling Our
Stories***

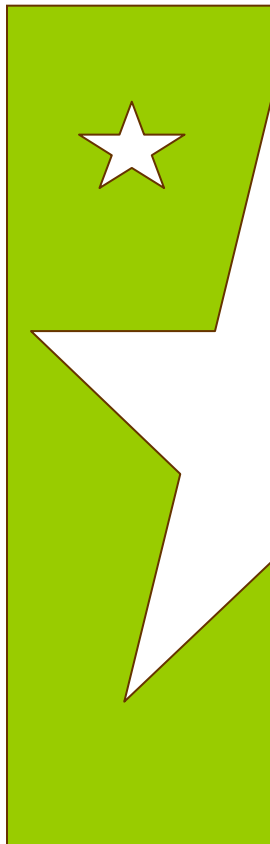
September 11-12

**Sheraton Gateway Los Angeles
Hotel (LAX Airport)
6101 West Century Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Phone: (310) 642-1111
Toll-free 888-716-8130**

-  To provide a network forum for women veterans from all wars,
-  To educate women veterans on their benefits and available health care programs,
-  To provide assistance with employment opportunities, and
-  To facilitate an open forum with legislative representatives and women commissions.



***Registration information available at
www.calvet.ca.gov***



CalVet Women Veterans Conference 2009

Continuing Our Legacy: Telling Our Stories

September 11-12

Hotel Registration Card

Sheraton Gateway Los Angeles Hotel (Airport)

6101 West Century Boulevard

Los Angeles, CA 90045

Phone: (310) 642-1111 / Toll-free 888-716-8130

Group Name: Women and Minority Veterans Affairs

Group Code: MWVA

Check in: September 11, 2009

Check out: September 12, 2009

Conference rate is available 3 days pre and 3 days post conference

Online hotel reservations can be made at:

www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=0907011223

CalVet Women Veterans Conference 2009 *Continuing Our Legacy: Telling Our Stories*

Conference Registration Form

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

Branch of Service: _____

Special needs (explain): _____

Please send registration forms and \$25.00 fee (*make checks out to Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 500*) to:

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 500

Attention: Women Veterans Conference

P.O. Box 255484

Sacramento, CA 95865

Contact: 916-653-2551

