

These items were sent to me by Rich Leistikow (Chapter 1 WI Rolling Thunder president) whom I got a chance to meet in Washington, D.C. during the Rolling Thunder Convention. Check them out. www.rollingthunder1.com

Veterans Benefits Declared Tax Exempt

The Rutland (VT) Herald (12/26) reports, "Payments under the Department of Veterans Affairs Compensated Work Therapy program are no longer taxable and disabled veterans who paid tax on these benefits in the past three years can now claim refunds, the Internal Revenue Service has ruled." Disabled veterans "who paid tax on these benefits in tax-years 2004, 2005 or 2006 can claim a refund by filing an amended return." The IRS agreed "with a U.S. Tax Court decision issued earlier this year, which held that CWT payments are tax-free veterans' benefits."

VA Opens PTSD Clinic For Women

The WKRC-TV Cincinnati (12/25) website reports, "More women are part of the U.S. military and seeing combat in Iraq and Afghanistan," and "some return with the same psychological problems their male counterparts faced for years, post traumatic stress disorder." In-patient clinics to deal with those PTSD problems are not new, for men, "but residential programs are new for women," as "there are only three such clinics in the country, though more are coming, because more are needed. One in seven military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan is a woman." Through group and individual therapy, "the clinic helps PTSD sufferers understand what is controlling them."

Furthermore, "By reinforcing which fears are legitimate, and which fears are irrational, patients learn how to take a deep breath, buy time to sort things out, stay calm, stay normal."

VA Institutes Suicide Prevention Measures

The Prescott Daily Courier (AZ) (12/26, Meurer) reports, Ali Cassidy is "heading up the local effort to enhance suicide prevention measures for veterans as part of a nationwide cooperative effort of VA hospitals."

Cassidy states that "Veterans are a special risk group for suicide," as "there's a number of reasons for that, but mainly due to the experience of trauma in battle, post traumatic stress disorder and their familiarity with guns. That makes it more likely if they attempt a suicide, it'll likely be fatal." Caring for veterans "does require some special knowledge of what a veteran goes through to counsel a veteran, and they have that knowledge," but "just as important, it immediately enters them into the VA Medical System, if they weren't already, and cross references their location to find the closest appropriate facilities to help them." Cassidy estimates "more than 100 life-saving emergency interventions, 'where they were literally going to do immediate harm to themselves,' since the beginning of the suicide prevention effort less than a year ago."

Homelessness A Continuing Fear Of Veterans.

The Hometown Annapolis (12/26) reports, "At least 3,000 homeless veterans live in the Baltimore metropolitan area, which includes Anne Arundel County, according to social worker Patricia Lane, coordinator of homeless veterans programs at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Baltimore."

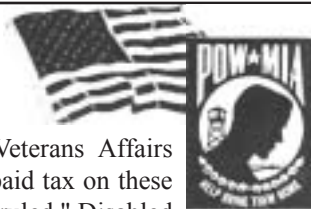
Ms. Lane said "her program gets about 20 new clients each month, most of them vets from the Vietnam Era." Ms. Lane added "that veterans' homelessness is sometimes caused by delayed combat stress, but more often it afflicts veterans who suffered from depression and substance abuse even before they entered the military." The military, especially during the Vietnam War era, "did little to detect and treat mental health and substance abuse problems, Ms. Lane said, and society was not welcoming for those who had served in uniform." Ms. Lane said her office helps vets deal with medical and housing problems, and whatever substance addictions they might have.

Illinois Leading The Way In Treatment.

The AP (12/26) reports, "The signature wounds of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, military experts say, are post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries." Among several states "shouldering responsibility for the detection and treatment of those conditions," Illinois has "a new screening program for all returning National Guard troops and a 24-hour hot line to help veterans with combat-related stress." As states "strive to help soldiers who have fallen through large gaps in care at the federal level, Illinois is emerging as a leader." Furthermore, "Illinois lawmakers found \$8 million for the programs this year."

Burial Benefits Of Veterans Revisited.

The Hartford Courant (12/26, Weir, 186K) reports, "For nine years, West Hartford resident Tom Guzzo has been fighting for a federal bill that would improve the burial benefits of veterans. When he got the call last week that it finally passed, it couldn't have come at a better time." The bill "makes permanent a policy in which the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will provide headstones for veterans," and "for families of veterans who have privately purchased headstones, the new bill will also provide service markers to be attached to those headstones." The bill passed the U.S. Senate last month and passed the House last week," and "lifts the expiration date and provides markers for those veterans who died between 1990 and 2001." For deceased veterans whose families have already purchased headstones, "the state department of veterans affairs will provide a medallion or bronze plate to be attached to the existing headstone."



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