

E-VETS



The Monthly Online Newsletter Serving Texas Veterans

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Veteran Homebuyer Tax Credit ends April 30, 2011

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

A little more than a year ago, the U.S. housing market experienced a short-term boom as first-time homebuyers rushed to take advantage of an \$8,000 tax credit before it expired. For civilians, the credit is gone, but certain Veterans who served overseas during 2009 and the first four

months of 2010 have the remainder of April to take advantage of the credit. According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website, a Veteran who served overseas on "official extended duty service" for at least 90 days during the 16-month period between Dec. 31, 2008,

and May 1, 2010, still qualifies for the credit, but only if they enter into a binding contract to buy a principal residence before midnight, April 30, 2011. For more information visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov and perform a search on "Form 5405."



Vietnam Veterans recognized at Texas Capitol

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Tuesday, March 29, 2011, the Texas Senate passed Senate Resolution 648 and Senate Resolution 649 to officially recognize Vietnam Veterans Day. Senate Resolution 648, introduced by Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, ceremonially honors the Veterans of our nation's Armed Forces who served during the Vietnam War. Senate Resolution 649, introduced by Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, Sen. Van de Putte, Sen. Carlos Uresti and Sen. Wendy Davis declared Tuesday, March 29, 2011, as Vietnam Veterans Day.

"On this day, Vietnam Veterans Day, I humbly request that we, as a state, keep in mind the sacrifices of those 58,220 service members and their families that were killed, the 303,635 that were wounded and the 1,698 that were classified as missing in action and we think about them throughout this day as we go about our job as being legislators, made possible only by the selflessness of so many Americans," Sen. Van de Putte said.

She then recognized four Vietnam Veterans on the Senate floor: Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady, Sgt. Ken Wallingford, Col. Farrell Sullivan, and Maj. Mary Parish.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady
Maj. Gen. Brady is the only living Army Veteran of Vietnam to hold both the Medal of Honor and



Photo by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Sgt. Ken Wallingford, Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady, Maj. Mary Parish, and Sue Sullivan, the wife of Col. Farrel Sullivan, are recognized on the Senate floor.

the Distinguished Service Cross.
On Jan. 6, 1968, near Chu Lai, Vietnam, then Maj. Brady volunteered to rescue wounded men
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Vietnam Veterans recognized

(Continued from page 1)

from four sites in enemy-held territory, all of which were reported to be heavily defended by and in close proximity to the enemy forces. He evacuated a total of 51 seriously wounded men, many of whom would have perished without prompt medical treatment.

Sgt. Ken Wallingford

Sgt. Wallingford joined the U.S. Army in 1969 and was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam in 1970 where he served as a sniper.

On April 5, 1972, while serving on the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) Advisory Team near Loc Ninh, his unit came under massive mortar and artillery fire. Sgt. Wallingford was taken prisoner and marched to Cambodia where he was held in solitary confinement for 10 months.

Sgt. Wallingford was repatriated on Valentine's Day 1973 and received an Honorable Discharge in June of that year. He was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Commendation Medal with "V" device and two Oak Leaf Clusters, Prisoner of War Medal, and at least 10 other medals and unit citations.

Col. Farrell Sullivan, USAF

On June 27, 1972, Col. Sullivan made the ultimate sacrifice for his country when his F4 fighter jet was shot down by hostile enemy fire over North Vietnam. Eleven years after that fateful day, Col. Sullivan's body was returned to his family. Col. Sullivan was represented by his wife, Sue Sullivan, on the Senate floor and his son, Michael Sullivan, in the gallery.

Maj. Mary Parish

Maj. Parish joined the U.S. Air Force in September 1966 and arrived in Vietnam in February 1968. Maj. Parish served as a nurse, providing medical attention to the wounded at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, from February 1968 to February 1969.

"Maj. Parish represents here today the need for all to recognize the contributions of female Veterans in the Vietnam War effort in addition to showing more support for our female Veterans," Sen. Van de Putte said.

Over 58,000 lost

Sen. Hinojosa, who served as a U.S. Marine squad leader in Vietnam from 1966 to 1968, then spoke of the impact the war had on American society and how that translated to a lack of appreciation for the sacrifices being made.

"So many of us who came back from Vietnam really felt unwelcomed, unappreciated for our valor and courage fighting for our belief and a way of life," Sen. Hinojosa said. "I will tell you that in Vietnam we lost a lot of good soldiers, we lost over 58,000 American soldiers."

Texas Veterans Commission

Just prior to the unanimous passing of the resolutions Sen. Van de Putte took time to recognize the many Veterans and Veterans groups in the gallery.

Standing among the groups in the gallery were four Texas Veterans Commission employees who served with distinction during their tours in Vietnam.

Col. Rufus Coburn, III

Col. Coburn served 27 years as an officer and fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force. His flying career included three combat tours in Vietnam and Thailand and commanding the 355th Operations Group, comprised of over 2,200 officers and airmen and 72 aircraft.

His combat decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star with V device, Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters, and four foreign decorations.

Col. Coburn is the Veterans Education Manager for the Texas Veterans Commission and has worked for the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Veterans Commission for 11 years.

Lt. Col. Winston Cover

Lt. Col. Cover was first deployed to Vietnam in 1969, where he served as a Senior American Advisor to the 8th Airborne Battalion, Airborne Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Lt. Col. Cover distinguished himself between April 25 and May 20, 1972, during one of the most intense and deadly assaults of the Vietnam War.

Lt. Col. Cover braved enemy fire in a fully exposed position to administer first aid and evacuate his deputy, who was severely wounded in the fighting. In the following days, Lt. Col. Cover moved from one position to another, directing fire that eliminated many enemy positions and thwarted enemy assaults.

Lt. Col. Cover is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, three Bronze Stars, the Air Assault Badge, the Combat Infantryman Badge, and the Army Commendation Medal with V device.

Lt. Col. Cover is a Veterans Service Representative for Claims with the Texas Veterans Commission at the Frank Tejada U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Clinic in San Antonio.

Lt. Col. Joe Dougherty

Lt. Col. Dougherty, served for 26 years in the U.S. Army where his assignments varied from 101st Airborne RVN (Republic of Viet Nam), 2nd/502nd Infantry, and Advisor, 12th Special Forces.

Lt. Col. Dougherty is a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) with the Texas Veterans Commission. He has been with Texas Veterans Commission since 2006.

Sgt. Craig Hardwick

Sgt. Hardwick, U.S. Army, served in Vietnam with Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, from November 15, 1968, to September 6, 1969. As an infantryman in the field he served in "more firefights than he can quantify" throughout his tour.

Sgt. Hardwick was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Army Commendation Medal with V device, and Ranger Tab.

Sgt. Hardwick is a Veterans Service Representative for Claims with the Texas Veterans Commission at the Frank Tejada VA Clinic in San Antonio.



Photo by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Above is the maquette version of The Texas Capitol Vietnam Monument. The Monument is scheduled to be dedicated in early 2012 on the grounds of the state Capitol in Austin, and will reach 14ft. tall.



Texas Veterans Commission assists at Camp Swift for Soldier Readiness Processing

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On March 5 and 6, Texas Veterans Commission personnel took part in the Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) of the 321st Military Intelligence Battalion at Camp Swift near Bastrop, Texas. Texas Veterans Commission staff were on hand to inform more than 200 Army Reservists of their benefits.

A SRP is a program that prepares soldiers for pending deployments and allows unit commanders to maintain their soldiers in a state of deployment readiness at all times. Even if soldiers are not scheduled for a deployment in the foreseeable future they are required to attend one SRP annually.

The SRP consists of two sections: one medical and one administrative. The administration section of the SRP consists of several different interviews to determine if the soldier has any new information to add or delete

from the current information on file. In addition to the legal and education stations, the Reservists attended stations that required talking to a chaplain, reviewing their life insurance, discussing family situation changes, and updating their information for security clearances.

For more information about the Texas Veterans Commission, visit www.TexasVeteransCommission.org



Photo Provided by Camp Swift

Bonnie Fletcher, Communications Specialist with Texas Veterans Commission, provides information on all benefits to soldiers of the 321st Military Intelligence Battalion during the Soldier Readiness Processing at Camp Swift.

Women Veterans Coordinator position proposed

By Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Senate Bill 34, prefiled by Sen. Judith Zaffirini (and co-sponsored by every female senator) on Nov. 8, 2010 would establish the Texas Women Veterans Program to assist women Veterans within the state to attain equitable access to federal and state Veterans' benefits and services. The bill would also create the position of a Women Veterans Coordinator at the Texas Veterans Commission.

On March 15, the House Appropriations Committee approved the addition of \$159,424 in House Bill 1 to fund a Women Veterans Coordinator at the Texas Veterans Commission for the 2012-2013 biennium.

Since the 1700's, women have

increasingly joined the U.S. Armed Forces, and about 10 percent of the U.S. Forces currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq are women. The higher number of women serving translates to a higher number of women Veterans coming home to Texas. The population of female Veterans in Texas is expected to grow by over 26 percent from 129,393 in 2003 to 163,249 by the end of the 2012-2013 biennium. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), female Veterans access Veterans' services at a higher rate than men. Of the total enrolled with the VA in Texas, 47,488 are women, 76 percent of whom are using health benefits.

The Texas Veterans Com-

mission strives to address the needs of women Veterans in each of their programs. While the Texas Veterans Commission has a Claims Counseling and Representation supervisor who monitors issues related to women Veterans as an additional duty, there is not a staff member whose focus is solely on these issues. Of the six largest states, only Texas does not have a Women Veterans Coordinator.

The mission of the Texas Veterans Commission Women Veterans Program will be to ensure that Texas women Veterans have equitable access to federal and state Veterans' services and benefits; perform outreach to improve women Veterans' aware-

ness of eligibility for federal and state Veterans' services and benefits; make recommendations to the Texas Veterans Commission to improve benefits and services; review programs, research projects and start initiatives designed to address or meet the needs of women Veterans; incorporate women Veterans' issues in the Texas Veterans Commission strategic planning; and participate in national forums and committees for women Veterans.

With the addition of a dedicated Women Veterans Coordinator, the Texas Veterans Commission will be better able to address all needs of women Veterans and continue to bring the best services to Veterans in Texas.

Female Veterans struggle with unemployment and homelessness

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Since the Revolutionary War American women have voluntarily chosen to take up arms to serve their country in its time of need. Historically, unless they hid their gender, American women were relegated to support roles with very few exceptions such as field nurses.

American attitudes toward women serving in the military have changed to such an extent that as of July 1, 2010, more than 230,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan alone. Unlike wars past, these women often find themselves serving in the direct line of fire. As the number of women in the military continues to grow so too do the unintended consequences of that growth, the homeless rate and unemployment rate for women Veterans.

“The number of female Veterans has doubled in the last decade,” said Tammy Duckworth,

assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). With this increase, female soldiers are two times more likely to become homeless than male veterans, she says.

The most prevalent factors leading to homelessness include unemployment, mental health issues ranging from Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) to Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and substance abuse. According to the VA, 10 percent of homeless Veterans are women, and that figure does not include the children of these homeless female Veterans.

One of the top priorities for a Veteran transitioning into the civilian world is finding a job. Female Veterans sometimes have difficulty translating their military service and experience into civilian terms in a resume. This can lead to an employer not real-

izing the unique and dedicated skills a female Veteran can bring to their organization, and thus female Veterans are losing out on a number of job opportunities.

Competition can also be an issue for women Veterans. They compete against others who have not spent the past decade in the military and have more identifiable job experiences. This fact places female Veterans at a disadvantage in a rough job market. It is typical for a woman to separate from the military and discover that her civilian counterparts obtained a degree and immediately entered the job market where they have been competing for years. This can leave the female Veteran feeling disadvantaged and inexperienced. After long periods of unemployment, the female Veteran may become incapable of supporting herself, which can lead to homelessness.

Fortunately there are a growing

number of organizations beginning to recognize these issues and taking action. One such organization is the Texas Veterans Commission.

Through grants from the Fund for Veterans Assistance the Texas Veterans Commission is tackling homelessness. In the past 14 months the Fund for Veterans' Assistance has provided grants totaling more than \$834,000 to organizations with a focus on homelessness. Those organizations include; Green Doors, Salvation Army, U.S. Veterans Initiatives, Santa Maria Hostel, Inc. and Homeless Veterans Services of Dallas. For more information on these organizations visit the Fund for Veterans Assistance grant awards section of the Texas Veterans Commission at <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/about/awards>

Largest number of applications for Fund for Veterans' Assistance grants to date

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

In February the Texas Veterans Commission made an aggressive effort to reach out and notify organizations of the open application period that ran from March 4th through March 28th. In addition to notifying previous grant recipients and applicants FVA personnel met with members of the Dallas Foundation, the San Antonio Area Foundation and posted the Request for Proposal (RFP) on the Texas Non-Profits website (<http://txnp.org>).

The effort proved very successful as there were 86 applications with requests for more than \$27 million. For the 4 grant

cycles that transpired in the year-and-a-half prior to this application period the Fund for Veterans' Assistance received a total of 98 applications requesting \$33.4 million.

“This response clearly demonstrates the need within the Veteran community is very high. With only \$4 million available to award the real work will be sorting through the many worthy projects” said Fund Director Bill Wilson.

There are 1.8 million Veterans currently residing in Texas. That number is likely to increase substantially as a result of the

reduction of U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan over the next two years. As the number of Veterans increases, TVC personnel anticipate a corresponding increase in the need for services as well.

For more information on the Fund for Veterans' Assistance and future grant opportunities visit www.TexasVeteransCommission.org





Veterans receiving VA educational benefits in Texas increases 64 percent in one year

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The number of Texas Veterans receiving VA educational benefits increased 64% in fiscal year (FY) 2010 when compared to FY 2009. In raw numbers it represents a jump from 40,902 Veterans receiving education benefits in FY09 to 67,015 in FY10.

During this time there was also a significant increase in the number of institutions and employers filing applications to provide training to Veterans. In FY 2009 the number of facilities with approved programs was 1,133. For FY 2010 the number jumped to 1,210 an increase of 6.8%.

As the State Approving Agency for Texas, TVC is under contract with the VA to determine those programs of education and train-

ing within the state which may be approved for veterans training. Through an approval process, TVC ensures that institutions and employers are in compliance with federal guidelines and are qualified to provide the type of training offered. TVC also continues to monitor approved programs by conducting annual on-site visits to all facilities that have veterans receiving benefits.

For questions regarding the Texas Veterans Commission Education Program, please call 877-898-3833 or email VetsEd@tvc.state.tx.us.



The Texas Veterans Commission gets social



By Lisa Waddell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

“A Veteran is in need of help. He is in a homeless shelter in Brownsville Texas.”

This was the beginning of a post on the Texas Veterans Commission’s Facebook page from Nov. 30, 2010.

“He filed a claim for hearing loss and was denied. He has only a few days before he will be turned out of the shelter. Can he apply for a pension?”

The Texas Veterans Commission responded quickly to the request to help this Veteran. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have changed the way the Texas Veterans Commission reaches the new generation of Veterans home from Iraq and Af-

ghanistan. An increasing number of older Veterans are connecting through social media too.

The good news for this Veteran: less than 45 days later, the Texas Veterans Commission Claims Counselor in Harlingen had secured a lump sum back payment on the hearing loss claim and a monthly pension sufficient for him to move out of the shelter and into an apartment.

The Texas Veterans Commission social media initiative was launched in September of 2010, establishing an agency presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. To date, Texas Veterans Commission Facebook posts have been viewed 68,083 times

and over 650 visitor comments have been posted.

“More Veterans are looking for us on the internet and social media platforms to get information,” says Duncan McGhee, Director of Communications for the Texas Veterans Commission. “We want to be there when they need us. That means we have to use a variety of social media platforms to be responsive to the Veterans we serve.”

Keeping Veterans informed about issues affecting the Veterans community is an important function of the agency’s social media initiative. Publicizing local benefits fairs, employment expos, and Veterans recognition

events via social media is another way the Texas Veterans Commission reaches Veterans not only around the state, but around the globe.

You can find the Texas Veterans Commission at the following locations:

Website: www.TexasVeterans-Commission.org

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/texasveteranscommission>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/texasveterans>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/txveteranscommission>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/54175984@N03/>



VetSuccess on Campus comes to Central Texas

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The transition from soldier to civilian can be complex and challenging. One of the first steps a Veteran may take during this transition is attending college. Universities around the nation are recognizing the unique challenges Veterans face when entering the collegiate setting. Several colleges now have specific programs with a concentrated focus on assisting these students as they make the switch from active duty military to college life. One such support program is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) VetSuccess on Campus program.

The VetSuccess on Campus program provides on-campus support to student Veterans allowing them to obtain assistance for their unique needs.

The program is now available at Texas A&M University Central Texas. A full-time, experienced vocational counselor serves as a one-stop shop for all Veterans, active duty military, and their eligible family members planning to attend classes. The VetSuccess on Campus counselor provides assistance from identifying and using the right educational benefits to job placement coordination with local Veterans employment representatives.

The VetSuccess on Campus program also provides a peer-to-peer counselor for helping Veterans with the challenges that may interfere with the completion of an education program and delay entry into the job market.

To drive student Veteran awareness of the program on the

Texas A&M University Central Texas campus, outreach activities are conducted through emails, posters, social media, campus newspaper and events at the student commons.

The VetSuccess on Campus program began in June 2009 as a pilot project at the University of South Florida. In September 2009, the program was expanded to two additional universities, Cleveland State University and San Diego State University. In October 2010 two community colleges and three additional four-year colleges and universities were added to the program including Texas A&M University Central Texas.

If you are a Veteran student attending Texas A&M University Central Texas, or active duty

military and are about to transition out and want more information about the VetSuccess on Campus program, please contact: Candace Lopez M. Ed. 254-519-5404 Email: c.lopez@ct.tamus.edu



Veteran news around the web

Paralympic Veterans May Qualify for New Benefit:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2076>

VA Extends Post-Incarceration Health Care:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2074>

UT study helps identify soldiers more at risk for PTSD:

<http://www.statesman.com/news/local/ut-study-helps-identify-soldiers-more-at-risk-1372146.html>

State veterans commission facing 20% budget cut:

<http://www.statesman.com/news/local/state-veterans-commission-facing-20-budget-cut-1350967.html>

VA Makes Progress to End Veteran Homelessness:

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=63386>

V.P. Biden surprises disabled veterans in Snowmass Village:

<http://www.9news.com/rss/story.aspx?storyid=190032>

Job Fairs, Benefits Fairs and More

Please visit the Texas Veterans Commission Calendar

for all upcoming Veterans events in your area!

<http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/calendar>

