

E-VETS



The Monthly Online Newsletter Serving Texas Veterans

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TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

www.tvc.state.tx.us
www.TexasVeteransCommission.org

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

Texas Veterans Commission awards nearly \$3 million in 'Housing4TexasHeroes' Grants	1
Legislators recognized for leadership for Veterans	2
Windsor Park Library hosts free screening of women in combat documentary-Lioness.....	2
Training available at no cost to unemployed Veterans	3
Texas.gov promotes Texas Veterans Portal.....	3
Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery Dedication on 70th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor	4
Commissioner Scott and Sen. Van de Putte highlight Proposition One	5
Student Veteran Resource Center opens at University of Texas.....	5
Texas Veterans Commission continues to reach out to college campuses	6
Veteran news around the web.....	6
Job Fairs Benefits Fairs and More.....	6
Proclamation from Gov. Perry.....	7

Texas Veterans Commission Awards Nearly \$3 Million in 'Housing4TexasHeroes' Grants

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Nov. 16, 2011, Texas Veterans Commission awarded eight organizations nearly \$3 million in grants from "Housing4TexasHeroes," a Texas Veterans Commission program announced by Gov. Rick Perry in August, which provides grants to organizations that provide temporary and permanent housing to Texas Veterans and their families.

The efforts of Gov. Perry and legislative leaders during the 82nd Legislative Session helped create the Housing4TexasHeroes program.

Organizations categorized as temporary housing assist low income or homeless Veterans, or the dependents of Veterans who are undergoing long term treatment at a medical facility in Texas.

Organizations awarded temporary housing grants:

- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston & Houston - \$600,000
- Harris and Galveston Counties Community Action Corporation of South Texas - \$160,500
- San Patricio County Families in Crisis, Inc. - \$400,000
- Bell, Coryell and Hamilton Counties
- MHMR Tarrant County - \$400,000

Organizations in the permanent housing category provide new home construction services or housing modification for Veterans requiring such modifications due to a physical disability or injury.

Organizations awarded permanent housing grants:

- Alamo Area Development Corporation - \$400,000
- Green Doors - \$500,000
- Travis County Meals on Wheels and More - \$300,000
- Houston Habitat for Humanity- \$200,000

"Housing4TexasHeroes is another example of the commitment that Gov. Perry and the Texas Legislature have made to our Texas Veterans and their families," says Thomas Palladino, Texas Veterans Commission Executive Director. "With 44 organizations requesting more than \$18 million, it is clear that there is a significant need for these services within the Veterans community."

Also on Nov. 16, the Texas Veterans Commission awarded over \$4.1 million in grants from the Fund for Veterans' Assistance to 16 organizations that will provide a broad range of assistance to Veterans and their families including counseling for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, financial assistance, legal assistance, employment assistance transportation and referral services.

The following is a list of the organizations receiving grants:

- American Red Cross of Central Texas (\$96,350)
- Referral (Women Veterans)
- Burnet County (\$100,230)
- Transportation
- City of Cuero (\$20,544)
- Counseling
- Community Learning Center, Inc. (\$300,000)
- Employment
- Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (\$210,000)
- Legal

- Lone Star Legal Aid (\$210,000)
- Legal
- Northwest Assistance Ministries (\$309,757)
- Financial Assistance
- Nueces County (\$150,000)
- Financial Assistance
- Operation Homefront of Texas (\$508,795)
- Financial Assistance
- Samaritan Center (\$500,000)
- Counseling
- Santa Maria Hostel, Inc. (\$322,301)
- Housing (Women Veterans)
- Texas Center Point Veteran Services (\$425,000)
- Counseling
- Texas VFW Foundation (\$500,000)
- Financial Assistance
- United Way of Southern Cameron County (\$100,000)
- Employment
- United Way of Tarrant County (\$250,000)
- Financial Assistance
- Worklife Ministry, Inc. (\$100,000)
- Employment

Grants from the Fund for Veterans' Assistance are funded through Veterans Cash, the Texas lottery scratch-off game, online donations through Texas.gov, donations when registering a vehicle, the State Employee Charitable Campaign, and direct contributions.

For more information about the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/help>.

Legislators recognized for Leadership for Veterans

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The Texas Veterans Commission has recognized nine legislators for their outstanding efforts in support of Texas Veterans and their families.

Acknowledging that a grateful nation never rests in honoring its sacred contract with the men and women who have provided for our national defense, these legislators worked tirelessly to ensure that Texas Veterans would have the access they deserve to claims assistance, employment services, education benefits, grant-funded services, and temporary and permanent housing.

Together, the legislators not only ensured that the budget for the Texas Veterans Commission was maintained, but also expanded the role of the Texas Veterans Commission in serving Veterans by transferring funding for Housing4Tex-

asHeroes and funding a new Women Veterans Coordinator. The legislators also passed several bills into law that protect and enhance funds and programs benefitting Texas Veterans.

Legislative Leadership Award Recipients:

- State Sen. Steve Ogden *Chair, Senate Finance Committee*
- State Sen. Tommy Williams *Member, Senate Finance Committee*
- State Rep. Jim Pitts *Chair, House Appropriations Committee*
- State Rep. John Otto *Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Articles I, IV & V*
- State Sen. Leticia Van de Putte *Chair, Senate Com-*

- mittee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations*
- State Sen. Wendy Davis *Member, Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations*
- State Rep. Joseph Pickett *Chair, House Committee on Defense & Veterans' Affairs*
- State Rep. Ralph Sheffield *Vice Chair, House Committee on Defense & Veterans' Affairs*
- State Rep. Joe Farias, *Member, House Committee on Defense & Veterans' Affairs*

Check out <http://www.facebook.com/texasveteranscommission> to view pictures of all the Legislative Leadership Award recipients.

For more information about the Texas Veterans Commission, visit www.texas-veterans.com.



Photo taken by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

TVC Executive Director, Thomas Palladinio, recognizes State Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, for her outstanding efforts in support of Texas Veterans and their families.

Windsor Park Library hosts free screening of women in combat documentary "Lioness"

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Dec. 6, the Windsor Park Branch Library in Austin, Texas, held a free December Community Cinema screening of the combat documentary "Lioness." The documentary tells the story of the first group female soldiers in U.S. history, to be sent in direct combat, which currently is in violation of official policy.

Told through intimate accounts, diary excerpts, and archive footage, the film follows five women who served together for a year in Iraq. The documentary reveals the unexpected course of events that began with using U.S. women soldiers to defuse situations with local civil-

ians, but resulted in the women fighting in some of the bloodiest counter-insurgency battles of the war.

Together, the women's narratives and scenes from their lives back home form a portrait of the emotional and psychological effects of war from a female point of view. "Lioness" is one of the first films to show the reality of the role women in the military are playing in Iraq, capturing a historical turning point for American society.

Though thousands of women have been involved in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, they have done so while serving in

combat support roles as medics or logistics officers because defense policy prohibits women from being assigned to any unit smaller than a brigade whose primary mission is direct combat on the ground.

Ironically, the current policy was adopted in 1994 and stated that "women should be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground." The policy also states that "direct combat takes place well forward on the battlefield."

After the showing of the film there was a question and answer

panel which contained representatives from the Texas Veterans Commission and Operation Outreach. The representatives gave their thoughts on the film and shared multiple resources and organizations that are available for women Veterans.

For more information on this documentary and up-coming screenings, go to <http://www.lionesthefilm.com/>.

Training available at no-cost to unemployed Veterans

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The Department of Labor (DOL) and Microsoft Corporation have entered into a partnership for the purpose of helping unemployed Veterans and their spouses enhance their employability. The partnership is an extension of Microsoft's "Elevate American Veterans" initiative to help Veterans and their spouses acquire the skills and resources needed for success in today's workplace.

Through the partnership, Veterans can secure vouchers for training that can lead to important industry recognized credentials. The two primary certifications available through the Elevate American Veterans program are:

- Microsoft Office Specialist
- IT Technical Professional

The Microsoft Office Specialist certification differs from other certifications offered by Microsoft in that people who pass the

exams are frequently employed in professions outside of the computer field. The individuals securing this certification tend to have a broad array of experience ranging from Administrative Assistants to Corporate Executives in positions requiring day-to-day problem-solving skills.

The Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) certification however, is best suited for individuals with IT experience. The MCITP certification lets prospective employers know the certified Veteran is capable of demonstrating comprehensive skills in planning, deploying, supporting, maintaining, and optimizing IT infrastructures.

The voucher program is limited to the five communities in the U.S. with the highest number of returning post-9/11 era Veterans: Seattle, Wash.; San Diego, Calif.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Northern Virginia; and the Houston area. While 1,000 vouchers per year

are allocated to each community over a two year period, only 35 vouchers have been requested in Houston to date.

"We need to get the information regarding this amazing opportunity out to the Veterans and their spouses," said Shawn Deabay, Director of the Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Employment Services. "It would be a shame to see this program end with so many of the vouchers going unused."

Vouchers are distributed through the local workforce offices in the Houston area inclusive of the following counties: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Waller, Walker and Wharton. In addition to the vouchers, Microsoft is offering in-person support to ensure Veterans and their spouses are successful in their training and certification.

To locate the nearest workforce office visit the Texas Veterans Commission website at <http://texas-veterans.com/locations/> and select "Employment Offices" from the dropdown menu then enter your zip code. When you arrive at the workforce center, be certain to identify yourself as a Veteran and request your Texas Veterans Commission Veteran employment representative.

Texas.gov promotes Texas Veterans Portal

By Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On November 5, the Texas Veterans Commission partnered with Texas.gov to promote the Texas Veterans Portal and the online donation tool for the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance at the University of Texas at Austin Veterans Appreciation game.

During the Texas.gov tailgate before the game, more than 60 people made a donation to the Fund for Veterans' Assistance and hundreds more learned about the services that the Fund provides to Veterans in Texas.

In 2010, Texas.gov teamed up with the Texas Veterans Commission to provide the Texas Veterans Portal, a website that offers a compre-

hensive range of information from multiple organizations including the Workforce Commission, the Veterans Land Board, 2-1-1 Texas, and TexVET. Veterans and those close to them can visit this site to learn more about benefits, access online services, download pertinent forms, locate community resources, review frequently asked questions, and more.

In May 2011, the Texas Veterans Commission also launched an online donation service on Texas.gov that lets Texans make tax-deductible donations to support Veterans through the Fund for Veterans' Assistance. Administered by the Texas Veterans Commission, the Fund for Vet-

erans' Assistance awards reimbursement grants to non-profits and government agencies that provide services to Texas veterans and their families. These organizations address a broad range of veteran needs, including transportation services, counseling, housing assistance, and family and child services.

For more information about the Fund for Veterans' Assistance, please visit www.tvc.state.tx.us/help.



Photo taken by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

During the Texas.gov tailgate, Christina Shubia donates to the Texas Veterans Commission, Fund for Veterans' Assistance.

Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery Dedication on 70th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor

By Jim Suydam, Veterans Land Board, Austin

Texas Veterans turned the 70th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor into a celebration on Dec. 7 as hundreds gathered to dedicate the Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery.

"We are here today to consecrate this land for our Texas Veterans," said Jerry Patterson, chairman of the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB). "Today, this site becomes hallowed ground in honor of their sacrifices."

Veterans eligible for free burial in the newest Texas State Veterans Cemetery were joined by elected officials, community leaders and top military brass drawn together to praise the accomplishment. The keynote speaker was retired U.S. Army Gen. Marc Cisneros. Ram Chavez and the Corpus Christi Veterans Band provided inspiring patriotic melodies and a surprise flyover by Training Air Wing 4 out of NAS Corpus Christi thrilled attendees.

The Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery is the result of years of hard work and cooperation. It started as a 54-acre field donated by Flint Hills Resources. Over the last year the VLB has transformed the field with an \$8.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs into a Veterans cemetery.

Burial at the Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery is a privilege that can not be bought, only earned through service. Veterans and their immediate family

are eligible.

The cemetery will be developed in phases and upon completion, will have more than 31,500 grave sites. The first phase of construction will create 4,808 grave sites. The grounds provide a committal shelter for services with full military honors. A memorial walkway will provide space for future memorials. A memorial wall will provide space to honor those whose remains are elsewhere. The spirit of service and patriotism lives everywhere at the Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery.

"Take pride in the ground you stand on today," Patterson said. "Your commitment to our veterans built these hallowed grounds into a resting place worthy of their sacrifice."

The VLB will own and operate the Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery under VA guidelines with continued coordination of VA benefits available to veterans upon death.

All burial benefits that eligible Veterans are entitled to, such as burial flags, grave markers, Presidential Memorial Certificates, or military honors, will be available at Texas State Veterans Cemeteries.

Since taking office in 2003, Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson has overseen the expansion of state Veterans services, including the construction of the state's first three Texas State Veterans Cemeteries, which

were built in Killeen, Mission and Abilene.

Texas State Veterans Cemeteries will coordinate with U.S. Department of Defense units or Veterans Service Organizations in nearby communities for military honors at Veterans' burials.

The rules for eligibility are the same as those for national cemeteries. Overall eligibility for burial is determined by VA regulations based on a variety of qualifying criteria, many of which may apply to a Veteran's periods of service on active duty or while in the Guard or Reserves. To ascertain eligibility, please review the regulations on the VA website at www.cem.va.gov/eligible.htm, or call a VA benefits counselor toll-free at 1-800-827-1000, or ask the Texas Veterans Commission or your county Veterans Service Officer for assistance.

The spouse or surviving spouse and dependent children of an



Photo taken by , Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

TVC Vice Chair Commissioner AI Cantu addresses the attendees at Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery dedication, on the 70th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

eligible Veteran are also eligible under current VA regulations.

The dedication ceremony was webcast live by Flint Hills Resources, and can be seen at www.CoastalBendDedication.com.

To learn more about the Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery, visit <http://www.glo.texas.gov/vlb/veterans-benefits/veterans-cemeteries/corpus-cemetery.html>.



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Look for new changes to E-Vets coming in January!

Commissioner Scott and Sen. Van de Putte highlight Proposition One

By Rick Svatora, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Nov. 4, 2011, Texas Veterans Commission Commissioner James H. Scott joined Texas Senator Leticia Van de Putte in an event at the San Antonio Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8936 to highlight the importance of Proposition One on the November 8th constitutional amendment ballot. Sylvia Sanchez of the Veterans of Foreign Wars was also on hand to welcome the more than 50 attendees.

Proposition One, approved by a margin of 83-17, amends the Texas Constitution to allow the 100 percent property tax exemption for 100 percent disabled Veterans to transfer to the surviving spouse should the Veteran pass away before the spouse.

“This constitutional amendment simply extends an existing exemption to the spouse who stood by their 100 percent disabled husband or wife,” said Sen. Van de Putte, who chairs the Senate Veteran Affairs and Military Installations Committee. “I consider it a fully-justified measure that honors those who fought for us; by granting the surviving spouse the financial peace of mind that the memory of the recently deceased deserves.

Sen. Van de Putte also recognized the Texas Veterans Commission for its work to assist Veterans and their families, particularly through its more than \$17 million in grants from the Fund for Veterans’ Assistance.

In recognizing the significance of the Sen. Van de Putte’s work, Commissioner Scott quoted Stevie Wonder, stating “isn’t she wonderful.”

Commissioner Scott reiterated the critical need to extend the tax benefit to the spouses left behind after a Veteran passes away.

A recent study by the National Alliance for Care giving and the United Health Foundation found that 70 percent of Veterans’ caregivers are their spouses or partners, compared to six percent nationally.

The spouses of more than 53,000 Veterans in the state of Texas may qualify under the new constitutional amendment.



Photo taken by Rick Svatora, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Commissioner James H. Scott and Sen. Leticia Van de Putte highlight the importance of Proposition One at the San Antonio Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8936.

Student Veteran Resource Center opens at UT

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2011, the University of Texas at Austin opened their first Student Veterans Resource Center to serve the needs of over 600 student Veterans on campus.

The new Veterans Resource Center will serve as a one-stop-shop for all student Veterans seeking information on all benefits that are available. It will also serve as a place where student Veterans can study, network, and spend time with other Veterans.

The center will be staffed by Benjamin Armstrong, the full-time student Veteran Coordinator, as well as a licensed clinical psychologist, provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Representatives from the Texas Veterans Commission and Texas

Workforce Center will also be supporting the student Veteran center.

Also, a Veteran Services Website was created to provide information about resources available to all student Veterans. For more information please go to <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/veterans/>.



Photo taken by Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Thomas Colbert, the Vice President of the University of Texas Student Veterans Association opens the new Student Veteran Resource Center at University of Texas.

Texas Veterans Commission continues to reach out to college campuses

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The Texas Veterans Commission visited five college campuses in the month of October reaching out to over 500 student Veterans.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio, St. Philips College, San Antonio College, University of Texas-Arlington and Tarrant County Community College invited the Texas Veterans Commission to their campuses to keep the hundreds of student Veterans attending their institutions, informed and well aware of all the benefits they are entitled to.

The first benefit the Veteran will most likely use when return-

ing to the civilian world is the G.I. Bill (MGIB) or Chapter 30, Post-9/11 GI Bill, also known as Chapter 33, or the Hazlewood Act.

There are a large number of Veterans that are only using their education benefits and not taking advantage of other benefits they are eligible for.

Texas Veterans Commission College Campus Outreach Initiative has provided information to student Veterans on all benefits ranging from state and federal, claims and representation, as well as employment services during all campus visits.

If you have questions about Veteran benefits, please go to <http://texas-veterans.com/>, or if you would like the Texas Veterans Commission to visit your college campus, please contact Bonnie Fletcher at 512-463-6834.



Veteran news around the web

Veterans Day Parade 2011 pictures in Austin, TX

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.277611518947182.65756.135403453167990&type=3>

Veteran part of White House ceremony

<http://www.foxbororeporter.com/articles/2011/11/23/news/10536735.txt>

VA recognizes outstanding achievements in Homeless Program

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2224>

Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance Maximum increases

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2201>

Agent Orange: With more diseases tied to use during Vietnam War, bill for Veterans' care skyrockets

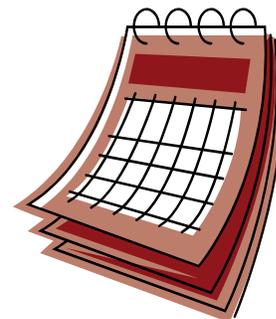
<http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/article/id/222189/group/homepage/>

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>





STATE OF TEXAS OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor killed more than 2,400 Americans. It left more than 1,000 wounded and nearly wiped out an entire fleet. It was designed to cripple the U.S. Navy before war had even started. Instead, it galvanized the fighting spirit of the American public, creating a foe more formidable than Japanese leadership ever anticipated.

While the morning of December 7, 1941, does indeed live as a “Day of Infamy,” the stories of bravery and selflessness in the face of unprecedented disaster became inspiration for a generation that found itself suddenly, horribly at war. Since then, the irrepressible courage of the men and women at Pearl Harbor that fateful morning has passed into legend, and will continue to inspire generations to come.

Each December, National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is recognized across the country. It is a time of reflection and remembrance. All Americans should come together to honor the bravery and sacrifice that occurred at Pearl Harbor.

At this time, I encourage my fellow Texans to remember with deep reverence all that Pearl Harbor represents to us. As Americans, we appreciate the service and sacrifice of our veterans, and will carry their memory in our hearts, minds and souls.

Therefore, I, Rick Perry, Governor of Texas, do hereby proclaim December 7, 2011, to be

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day in Texas



in Texas, and urge the appropriate recognition whereof.

In official recognition whereof,
I hereby affix my signature this the
28th day of November, 2011.


Governor of Texas