

# E-VETS



The Monthly Online Newsletter Serving Texas Veterans

Volume 10 | Issue 10 | October 2011



**TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION**

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

## Our Veteran Online Partners

Texas Adjutant General's Department  
www.agd.state.tx.us

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
www.theccb.state.tx.us

Veterans Land Board  
www.texasveterans.com

Texas Workforce Commission  
www.twc.state.tx.us

Partners Across Texas  
www.texvet.com

211 Texas  
https://www.211texas.org/211/

### WHAT'S INSIDE?

- Texas Veterans Commission Grantee provides affordable housing for Veterans ..... 1
- Retroactive traumatic injury benefits no longer just for OIF/OEF injuries ..... 2
- Measures to give 100% tax exemption to surviving spouse passes Texas Legislature..... 2
- Grand Opening for New VA Clinic in Temple ..... 3
- Lone Star Battalion returns from Afghanistan ..... 3
- Family Employment Assistance Counselor Program assists military spouses..... 4
- Veterans Day regional sites and contacts ..... 5
- Veteran news around the web..... 5
- Job Fairs, Benefits Fairs and More ..... 5

## Texas Veterans Commission Grantee provides affordable housing for Veterans

By Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On October 4, the Housing and Communities Services held a ribbon cutting ceremony at Montabella Pointe Apartments in San Antonio, Texas, to announce the grand opening of the apartment complex providing affordable housing to Veterans and their families.

Through a \$502,622 grant provided by the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA), Housing and Community Services is now able to provide affordable housing, rental assistance and utility assistance to Veterans and their families to reside at the new Montabella Pointe Apartment complex.

"To provide these services, we were fortunate enough to get a grant through the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance," said Jose Mascorro, director of Corporate Administration at Housing and Community Services. "Through this program every military Veteran at the Montabella Pointe Apartments is eligible for 20 percent rental assistance. They will also be provided with utility assistance that will help them make the transition from military life to civilian life that much easier."

Additionally, case management will be available to coordinate



Photo taken by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Jada Sullivan, a U.S. Army Veteran, addresses the attendees at the grand opening for the Montabella Pointe Apartments, where she lives with her four children.

support services provided on site and referrals to outside agencies for these families to meet their needs. With 144 units available to Veterans and their families, Housing and Community Services expects to serve 472 Veterans, dependents and surviving spouses with FVA grant funds.

"The men and women in uniform who serve to protect our homes will now have a home to call their own because of the

Montabella Pointe Apartments and I can't think of any higher tribute to the Veterans than to give them a roof over their heads," said Rick Svatora, manager of the Texas Veterans Commission Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Division.

Several Veterans and their families have already moved in. Jada Sullivan, a U.S. Army Veteran, moved in at the end of September with her four children.

"I have been privileged to meet a lot of people dedicated to Veterans, who were able to get me to this point to say I have a home for myself and my children," said Sullivan.

In order to apply for housing at Montabella Pointe, Veterans should call the main office at the apartments at 210-255-1893.

The Fund for Veterans' Assistance awards reimbursement grants through two categories: the General Assistance category and Housing4TexasHeroes. The grants are made to eligible charitable organizations, local government agencies, and Veterans Service Organizations that provide direct services or provide temporary or permanent housing to Texas Veterans and their families. For more information on the Fund for Veterans' Assistance, please visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/help>.

# Retroactive traumatic injury benefits no longer just for OIF/OEF injuries

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Effective October 1, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is extending retroactive traumatic injury payments to servicemembers and Veterans who suffered qualifying injuries during the period of Oct. 7, 2001, to Nov. 30, 2005, regardless of their place of duty when the injuries occurred.

This is important information for many servicemembers and Veterans who suffered any traumatic injury while serving at any duty station outside of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

In October 2010, President Barack Obama passed the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2010, which removed the requirement that injuries during this time period be incurred in OIF/OEF.

The Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) Traumatic Injury Protection Benefit, known as TSGLI, will be payable for the injuries that occurred during this time period. This benefit is payable whether or not the servicemember or Veteran had SGLI coverage at the time of the injury.

"Now all of our nation's

servicemembers who suffered severe traumatic injuries while serving their country can receive the same traumatic injury benefits, regardless of where their injury occurred," said VA Secretary, Eric K. Shinseki. "We at the VA appreciate the efforts of Congress and the President to improve benefits for our troops."

All branches of the service are reevaluating any denied claims that were previously submitted and reaching out to those individuals whose injury did not occur during these conflicts.

National Guard and Reserve

members are also eligible for a TSGLI payment, even if the cause was not related to their military service, such as an injury that occurred while working at home or a civilian automobile accident.

For more information or to apply for a TSGLI payment, servicemembers and Veterans should go to <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/TSGLI/TSGLI.htm>. They can also contact their branch of service TSGLI Office.

# Measure to give 100% tax exemption to surviving spouses on November 8 ballot

By Rick Svatora, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

In May 2011, the Texas Legislature unanimously passed a measure that, if approved by Texas voters, will extend the 100 percent property tax exemption provided to totally disabled or unemployable Veterans to their surviving spouses.

Senate Joint Resolution 14, by Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, and Senate Bill 516, by Sen. Dan Patrick, will allow tax appraisal districts to provide to the surviving spouse of a 100 percent disabled Veteran the 100 percent property tax exemption that the veteran had been receiving at their residence homestead.

The measures received significant backing from Veteran service organizations, which made the exemption their top initiative for the 82nd Legislative Session.

Because the change requires amending the Texas Constitution, Texas voters must approve the proposal by a majority vote in the

Nov. 8, 2011, statewide election. The surviving spouse exemptions is Proposition 1 on that ballot.

The change would rectify a problem currently experienced by spouses when a 100 percent disabled Veteran passes away. Under current law, surviving spouses of a 100 percent disabled Veteran must not only deal with the grief of their loss, but with a potentially daunting tax bill as well. The median Texas homeowner pays \$2,275 per year in property taxes. This tax hit, in conjunction with the loss of much of the monetary benefit the family had received from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), can threaten the financial security of military families.

If approved by voters, the legislation would entitle the surviving spouse to the 100 percent property tax exemption if:

- The property was the surviving spouse's homestead when the Veteran died;
- The property remains the surviving spouse's homestead; and
- The surviving spouse has not remarried since the death of the disabled Veteran.

According to the legislation, the spouse is not obligated to remain in the original home so long as the new home is designated a homestead and the spouse does not remarry: "If the surviving spouse subsequently qualifies a different property as a residence homestead and has not remarried, the surviving spouse would be entitled to a property tax exemption on that homestead of the same dollar amount received on the former homestead that qualified for the surviving spouse homestead exemption."

If passed by Texas voters, the

new exemption would take effect on Jan. 1, 2012.



## Grand Opening for New VA Clinic in Temple

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Wednesday, September 28, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) held a grand opening event for its newest addition to the Central Texas Veterans Healthcare System. The new VA Clinic - Temple Annex is located in the Outdoor America Mall at 4501 South General Bruce Drive in Temple.

"This is a wonderful facility and a testament to the VA's ongoing commitment to Veterans in Texas," said Texas Veterans Commission Executive Director Thomas Palladino.

The clinic will be the first in Texas to implement a new model for treatment called the "Patient Aligned Care Team" or PACT.

According to Thomas C. Smith III, Director of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, patient-driven care focuses on the person rather than the condition/disease. Under the PACT system, Veterans

will not only have a primary care provider, but an entire team of healthcare professionals. Smith said the purpose of getting a whole team involved is to take a more holistic, approach to our Veterans care.

"By using the PACT concept, we will engage each Veteran to work together with health care professionals and plan for their whole-person care and lifelong health and wellness," said Smith. "Our focus will be on partnering Veterans with their health care team and offering them access to care using diverse methods, such as regular scheduled visits, group visits, educational seminars, telephone, and even via the Internet through secure messaging. The Veteran will be at the center of our team-based care approach."

The PACT comprises a nurse who serves as a care manager, a clinical associate and administrative clerk.

The VA Clinic - Temple Annex will house five care teams, as well as a visiting social worker, clinical pharmacist and psychologist, and specialist care providers. To address the needs of the growing number of female Veterans, one team will be dedicated to comprehensive women's health.

U.S. Rep. John Carter, 31st Congressional District of Texas, referred to the PACT model as an "outside-of-the-box" approach that helps Veterans address their health and wellness.

"The future of medicine is addressing wellness as much as treating illness," said Rep. Carter. "I feel like we owe Veterans the very best we have to offer because that is what they have given to us."



Photo taken by Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

U.S. Representative John Carter, Thomas C. Smith and Dr. Olawale Fashina cut the ribbon for the grand opening at the new VA Clinic in Temple, Texas.

## Lone Star Battalion returns from Afghanistan

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Oct. 1, 2011, Texas Veterans Commission employee, 1st Lt. Jeff Williford returned to Ellington Field after a yearlong tour of duty as part of Operation Enduring Freedom with the 1/23 Lone Star Battalion.

1st Lt. Williford is a Marine Reservist of the 1/23, which is known as the "Lone Star Battalion," along with 800 other Marines and Navy Corpsmen. The combat tour in Afghanistan lasted seven months from the end of February to the beginning of October.

The Lone Star Battalion was deployed to 29 different locations and served in every province in Afghanistan helping train the Afghan Military Police.

Headquartered at Houston's Ellington



Field, the 1/23 is the only Marine Reserve battalion to have served in Afghanistan.

In addition to being an active reservist in the Marines, 1st Lt. Williford also works for the Texas Veterans Commission in Austin, Texas. He is a member of the Public Intergovernmental Affairs Division and his main duty is government relations as the Legislative Liaison.

# Family Employment Assistance Counselor Program assists military spouses

By Cheri Smith, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, military spouse unemployment has reached 26 percent. Change of location and deployments cause military families to move from duty station to duty station across the United States and overseas. Adding to the stress of the move is the financial instabilities of the move and in most cases the loss of the spouse's employment.

In 2009, the Texas Legislature funded the Family Employment Assistance Counselors (FEAC) program. Counselors are strategically located at Fort Hood, Fort Bliss and Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

The program provides a full range of employment, training and placement services for spouses and caregivers of active duty service members.

In addition to serving as an advocate for employment and training opportunities, the FEAC counselors work closely with community-based organizations to best support military families.

In 2011, over 136 clients have been referred to the San Antonio FEAC program, led by Patrick Driscoll, including spouses looking for immediate assistance

other than employment. Through Driscoll's expertise, 38 spouses found employment, 17 participants transitioned to new locations, and four participants are currently enrolled in a full time education program.

During the recent Texas Veterans Commission's annual conference held in Houston, Texas, Driscoll was awarded the Texas Veterans Commission Outstanding Service Award for his dedication and outstanding service to service members and their families.

Driscoll started working at the Texas Veterans Commission in the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and also spent time as a ReaLifelines Counselor where his focus was helping wounded warriors and their family members or caregivers' transition to employment. In addition to providing employment services, Driscoll provided in-depth knowledge of supporting programs such as resources for survivor benefits and social services, just to name a few.

Driscoll is credited with creating and maintaining an effective FEAC program and assisting in training newly appointed FEAC



Photo taken by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

TVC Executive Director Thomas Palladino, TVC Employment Director Shawn Deabay, and TVC Chairman T.P O'Mahoney present Patrick Driscoll with the Texas Veterans Commission Outstanding Service Award at the 64th Annual Training Conference.

counselors.

Through his network of veterans' organizations in San Antonio and by establishing close relationships with such organizations as Operation Homefront, Catholic Charities, The San Antonio Food Bank, Family Services of San Antonio and other Veteran Service and Social Service organizations and agencies, Driscoll

has been successful in securing employment and services for the families of Veterans.

To find more information about the FEAC program, please visit <http://texas-veterans.com/dependents/employment-assistance>.



**Invite Texas Veterans Commission to your  
college campus!**  
**Contact Bonnie Fletcher at 512-463-6834 for  
more details.**

## Veterans Day 2011 regional sites and contacts

### Austin

The annual Veterans Day Parade will be held on Nov. 11, 2011 in downtown Austin, Texas. The event kicks off at 9:00 a.m. from the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge and travels up to the Capitol Building.

There will be an 11:00 am Ceremony at the South Capitol steps following the parade.

Olie Pope

Travis County Veteran Service Office-P.O. Box 1748, Palm Square, Austin, TX 78767

Phone: (512) 854-9340

Fax: (512) 854-8443

Email: [olie.pope@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:olie.pope@co.travis.tx.us)

Website: [www.Nov11.org](http://www.Nov11.org)

### Bonham

Ms. Tina McDaniel

VA North Texas Health Care

System

1201 East 9th Street

Bonham, TX 75418

Phone: (903) 583-6282

Fax : (903) 583-6689

E-mail: [tina.mcdaniel@va.gov](mailto:tina.mcdaniel@va.gov)

### Dallas

The 2011 Veterans Day parade will be in downtown Dallas. It will be on Friday, November 11, with massing of the colors and the 11 hour (11:00 a.m.) ceremony in front of City Hall. The parade will commence following the official ceremony (approximately 1 hour). The route will start at Reunion Arena, will proceed north on Houston Street, east on Main Street, south on Ervay Street, west on Young Street, south on Akard Street and pass in review in front of City Hall.

2011 Parade Theme: "Remembering Pearl Harbor."

Lt. Col. Don B. Munson  
(Ret.) Greater Dallas Veterans  
Foundation

1000 Basilwood Drive

Coppell, TX 75019

Phone: (972) 471-3499

Fax: (972) 471-3499

E-mail: [don.munson@tx.rr.com](mailto:don.munson@tx.rr.com)

Website: [www.vetsdayindallas.org](http://www.vetsdayindallas.org)

### Houston

On Friday, Nov. 11, 2011, the City of Houston will show support of our Armed Forces as they celebrate the 13th Annual Houston Salutes American Heroes Veterans Day Commemoration and Parade.

The ceremony begins at 10:00 a.m. on the steps of City Hall.

The American Heroes Parade will follow at 11:30 a.m.

Ms. Melissa Tatum  
Houston Salutes American  
Heroes

901 Bagby Street

Houston, TX 77002

Phone: (832) 393-0863

Fax: (832) 393-0862

E-mail: [melissa.tatum@houstontx.gov](mailto:melissa.tatum@houstontx.gov)

Website: <http://www.houstontx.gov/specialevents/index.html>

### Killeen

Mr. Elijah King Jr., (CSM, Ret.)  
Chairman

Central Texas Area Veterans

Advisory Committee

2509 Little Nolan Road

Killeen, TX 76542

Phone: (254) 553-3288

Fax: (254) 553-3289

E-mail: [elijah.kingjr@us.army.mil](mailto:elijah.kingjr@us.army.mil)

### San Antonio

The U.S. Military Veterans Parade Association is hosting the 12th Annual Veterans Parade on Nov. 12, 2011, at noon.

Esther Garcia

Vice President

USMVPA Association

(210) 380-7046 or 221-6498

## Veteran news around the web

**Veterans awarded opportunity to have disability ratings reviewed by the Physical Disability Board of Review**

<http://texas-veterans.com/latest-news/entry/physical-disability-board-of-review>

**Boeing wins Texas Veterans Commission Service Award**

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/business/article/Boeing-wins-Texas-Veterans-Commission-service-2228904.php>

**VA announces PSA about Women Veterans**

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2181>

**VA awards \$7.5 million to U.S. Olympic Committee**

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2186>

## 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>

