

E-VETS



The Monthly Online Newsletter Serving Texas Veterans

Volume 10 | Issue 9 | September 2011



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

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Housing4TexasHeroes program to provide permanent housing for Texas Veterans

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

As a direct result of the efforts of Gov. Rick Perry and a bipartisan group of key legislators including Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, Chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee, and Sen. Tommy Williams, Texas Veterans now have a new program designed to provide housing assistance. The "Housing4TexasHeroes" program was established to assist Veterans with their housing needs in two program categories: temporary housing and permanent housing.

"The freedoms we all enjoy are the direct result of the service and sacrifice of our Veterans, who valued their country and their communities, above themselves," Gov. Perry said. "Housing4TexasHeroes will help ensure veterans and their families have adequate housing as they ease back into civilian life and enjoy the blessings of liberty they have earned with their own valor and sacrifice."

"Housing4TexasHeroes is another example the commitment that Gov. Perry and the Texas Legislature have to our Texas Veterans and their families," says Palladino. "All eligible organizations with programs that assist Veterans with housing were encouraged to apply for a grant."

The Housing4TexasHeroes program was transferred from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to the Texas Veterans Commission during the most recent legislative session. Housing4TexasHeroes will provide nearly \$3 million in grants through the Texas Veterans



Photo taken by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

(from left) TVC Executive Director Thomas Palladino, Sen. Tommy Williams, TVC Chairman T.P. O'Mahoney and TVC staffer Rick Svatora presented Sen. Williams with the Texas Veterans Commission Leadership Award on September 15 for his work to create the Housing4TexasHeroes Veterans housing assistance program.

Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance to organizations that provide housing to Veterans and their families due to the assistance of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

Organizations that provide temporary housing to low income or homeless veterans, or to the dependents of veterans who are undergoing long term treatment at a medical facility in Texas, are eligible for grant funds in the temporary housing category.

Organizations that provide permanent housing, such as new home construction or housing modification for Veterans requiring such modifications due to a physical disability or injury are eligible for funds in the permanent housing category.

The application period for the inaugural Housing4TexasHeroes grant closed on Friday, September 16. Funds for this grant period will be allocated evenly into the two program categories of temporary housing and permanent housing and will be awarded on Nov. 17, 2011.

For more information on the Housing4TexasHeroes program, visit the Fund for Veterans' Assistance page at www.tvc.state.tx.us.

The Texas Veterans Commission hosts 64th Annual Training Conference in Houston

By Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The Texas Veterans Commission 64th Annual Training Conference was held in Houston, Texas, at the Westin Galleria from September 12-15.

During the opening session on September 12, Texas Sen. Dan Patrick, T.P. O'Mahoney, Chair of the Texas Veterans Commission, Texas Sen. Mike Jackson, Texas Rep. Joe Pickett, Texas Rep. Sylvester Turner, Texas Rep. Allen Fletcher, Paul Moore, Executive Secretary of the Texas Veterans Land Board, Brigadier General Joyce Stevens, Assistant Adjutant General of the Texas Military Forces, and Bob Black, President of the State Bar of Texas, spoke about Veterans' issues in the Legislature and other state Veterans' programs.

At the end of the opening

session, Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director of the Texas Veterans Commission, presented Kay Sim, Executive Director of the Houston Bar Association, with an award for her work and leadership with the Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans.

During the closing session on September 15, the Texas Veterans Commission awarded organizations for excellence in serving Veterans.

Six employers were awarded for their commitment in hiring Veterans over the past year. The Boeing Company won the Texas Veterans Commission Chairman's Award for Outstanding Service to Veterans in recognition to organizations that provide outstanding services to Veterans and their families, and

Cooper Tire and Rubber won the National Employer Award. Bell Helicopter won Large Employer (251 or more total employees), and Securitas Security won Small Employer (50 or fewer total employees), both in Amarillo, Texas. Lowe's in Granbury, Texas, won for Medium Employer (51-250 total employees). The Disabled Veteran Employer was presented to Topflite Environmental Services located at Dyess Air Force Base.

The Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance presented the Community Partnership Award for Distinguished Service to Texas Veterans to two organizations: Child Crisis Center of El Paso and to United Way of San Antonio.

"These two grantee organiza-

tions represent the true spirit of excellence and commitment to Texas Veterans and their families in times of need," said Bill Wilson, Director of the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance. "They are able to touch Veterans' lives in the communities where they live."

In addition to organizations being recognized for their commitment to serving Veterans, the Texas Veterans Commission trained over 500 attendees during the conference.

"We train so that we can do better at our jobs and help Veterans," said Palladino. "Veterans are the reason we are all here so we need to do all we can do our jobs the best we can."

The Texas Veterans Commission presents awards to Veterans during Fall Conference

By Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

During the conference, the Texas Veterans Commission presented individuals with awards for their commitment to Veterans.

Patriot Award

Joel Jimenez, a Vietnam Veteran and Purple-Heart recipient from Wichita Falls, Texas, was presented with the Patriot Award. This award is in recognition of his devotion to working on behalf of Veterans of North Texas for over two decades.

Jimenez organized the Disabled American Veterans van service that provides transportation for Veterans with appointments at the VA Hospital in Oklahoma City and created a recognition program for local

medical providers who help Veterans by providing reduced-cost or free medical services. He also initiated the Greatest Generation Award to recognize the service of our World War II Veterans, founded the Wichita Falls Veterans Day Parade and Memorial Day Ceremony, and served on the steering committee and providing transportation for the WWII Honor Flight.

Greg White Award

The Greg White Award honors a Veterans Employment Services program employee whose conduct embodies the exceptional commitment Greg White provided. White passed away in February 2010 while serv-

ing as the State Coordinator for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment in the Veterans Employment Services program at the Texas Veterans Commission.

Texas Veterans Commission Employment Services Director Shawn Deabay presented the Greg White Award to Mano Bonilla, a Texas Veterans Commission Local Veterans Employment Representative based in El Paso, Texas.

"This award means a lot to me, but I would rather have Greg back more than anything else," said Bonilla when he accepted the award.

Delilah Washburn Award

To honor the legacy of Delilah

Washburn, former Houston Regional Director, the Delilah Washburn Award was established to commemorate her and to recognize individuals for humanitarian acts of kindness. This award will recognize magnanimous deeds of true compassion above and beyond the call of duty and acknowledge those who perform them.

Jim Richman, Director of Texas Veterans Commission Claims Representation and Counseling, presented Kerry Easley, Veterans Counselor at the Texas Veterans Commission Harrison County Veterans Service Office, with the 2011 Delilah Washburn Award.

Texas Veterans Commission attends National Veteran Small Business Conference

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On August 15-18, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in partnership with the Veteran Federal Interagency Council, hosted the 2011 National Veteran Small Business Conference in New Orleans, La.

The conference is the largest of its kind, with over 400 booths on display to support Veteran-owned and service-disabled Veteran-owned small businesses around the country.

Jimmy Danner, a Texas Veterans Commission Employment Representative, attended the conference and felt it assisted Veterans in many ways.

"I returned from the conference with a good impression of the intent and process to help Veteran business owners be more

successful," said Danner. "The state of Texas' involvement in this conference was necessary especially with the Veteran-friendly reputation we uphold."

Texas Veterans Commission not only helps Veterans access the benefits they have earned but also leads the nation in Veteran employment.

The information provided at the conference is important for all Veterans looking for resources to start their own business.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki, was also in attendance.

"We know Veterans are a sizable segment of the business community," said Shinseki. "They represent 10% of small business owners and employ 10%

of America's working population, about nine million Americans."

Participants could chose from more than 200 sessions designed to share information with new and established businesses and to connect them directly to government procurement decision makers. The sessions touched on topics such as the benefits of hiring Veterans, opportunities to build and strengthen business processes, and contracting legal requirements.

Attendees connected with program managers from the VA and other federal agencies to learn about future requirements, expand business knowledge and contracting opportunities by using VetGovPartner (VGP), which is the new portal and social

network for the National Veteran Small Business Conference. VGP is a fully-integrated web application designed to facilitate matchmaking, partnering and networking among attendees before, during and after the conference.

This event provided an opportunity for Veteran business owners to learn, exchange ideas, and network with business peers, federal government agencies, prime contractors, and industry experts in one location.

For more information on the National Veteran Small Business Conference, please visit: <http://www.nationalveteransconference.com/>

POW/MIA Appreciation Day recognized at Texas State Cemetery

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Sept. 17, 2011, National POW/MIA Recognition day was officially commemorated in Austin, Texas, at the Texas State Cemetery, by the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Chapter 915. Ceremonies honoring Texas Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action during the Vietnam War were conducted throughout the morning and early afternoon.

VVA 915 Chapter President Roy McCrary welcomed the attendees and introduced the Keynote Speaker, Mickey Olmstead, whose father, Cmdr. Stanley E. Olmstead, is listed as Missing in Action in Vietnam.

On Oct. 17, 1965, after a successful mission bombing a supply line, Olmstead's F-4

Phantom was struck in the nose by ground fire. Olmstead spoke of growing up fatherless and wondering about his father's fate.

The family learned Porter Halyburton, Olmstead's navigator, had ejected from the F-4 fighter jet and was being held as a prisoner of war. Olmstead met Halyburton years later and was told of his father's fate from the last person to see him alive. Halyburton told Olmstead that his father's remains are on Phuon Vang Mountain in Vietnam.

Before handing the podium back to McCrary, Olmstead acknowledged his gratitude for ongoing efforts by The Department of Defense (DOD) to find and identify those who remain

missing in Vietnam.

The DOD's efforts include providing expertise in archival research, conducting field investigations, and dedicating scientific laboratories to finding and bringing missing personnel home.

Veterans from each branch of the service took the podium and read aloud over 130 names of POW/MIA's throughout Texas.

The day's event closed out with the VVA Chapter 863 from Kerrville performing a 21 Gun Salute, and those present were invited to lay wreaths at the memorial in remembrance for the POW/MIA servicemembers who made the ultimate sacrifice.



Photo taken by Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Keynote speaker, Mickey Olmstead, addresses the attendees on POW/MIA Appreciation Day at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin.

'Heroes Night Out' to open Green Zone Resource Center for Veterans

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

On Friday, Oct. 14, 2011, Heroes Night Out (HNO) will officially open the HNO Green Zone Resource Center in Cedar Park, Texas. Wes and Judy Pierce, founders of Heroes Night Out, envision a "one-stop-shop" where Veterans can have all their needs addressed.

"When fully operational, the Center will provide Veterans access to representatives providing services, including U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) claims representation, education benefits, home loans, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder counseling, employment assistance and much more in a positive and responsive environment," said co-founder Judy Pierce.

The HNO Green Zone Resource Center was founded by the Pierces. In 2004, Wes and Judy met Sgt. Michael Clark of the U. S. Army when he was recruiting one of their sons, Tim

Pierce. Sgt. Clark explained the opportunities the Army had to offer and the benefits of being part of an extended military family. Not only did Tim enlist but so did two of his brothers, Troy and Jeremy.

In 2008, Sgt. Clark was wounded while serving in Iraq. He eventually was admitted to Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) in San Antonio, Texas, where his left leg was amputated. During the many trips to BAMC to visit Sgt. Clark, Wes and Judy encountered family members of other wounded heroes. Most families were staying at the Fisher House, which provides free or low cost lodging to Veterans and military families receiving treatment at select military medical centers, as their loved ones rehabilitated. The Pierces realized these families needed a break from the everyday routine, "a night out."

Using their own money, the Pierces secured \$50 gift cards to restaurants in the area and presented them to family members of the wounded. The single gift card grew into what they called the "Heroes Night Out Appreciation Wallet," containing six \$50.00 gift cards. Soon Judy was running out of space in her small home office and began to look for additional space.

Their place of worship, Twin Lakes Fellowship Church offered a 6,000 square foot building on the grounds.

They interviewed several Veterans and discovered that the services available were fragmented and disjointed.

The Pierces decided to open a resource center where Veterans could have their needs addressed in one place.

The Pierces began reaching out to businesses and were amazed at the response. A local electrician

offered to rewire the building for the cost of material. Home Depot provided material and labor for the interior remodel while the Dell employees volunteered their time to provide landscaping services. Soon a host of organizations were showing up and providing everything from office furniture and supplies to counter tops and plumbing.

What began as one couple on a mission to provide wounded heroes with a "Heroes Night Out Appreciation Wallet" grew into the HNO Green Zone Resource Center.

They invite all Veterans and their family members to visit the Center located at 1150 S. Bell Blvd. Cedar Park, TX 78613. For more information visit <http://heroesnightout.org/> or call 512-986-7660.

U.S. Army to reconsider denied Purple Hearts

By Duncan McGhee, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The U.S. Army is encouraging those individuals denied Purple Heart awards for concussive or mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to resubmit documentation for reconsideration of the medal. It is important to note the injury must have occurred on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the incidence of traumatic brain injuries is occurring at a significantly higher rate in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars than in prior conflicts. The Defense and Veteran's Brain Injury Center and the U.S. Department of Defense estimate 22 percent of all combat casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan are brain injuries, compared to 12 percent of Vietnam related combat casualties. Soldiers ex-

periencing other blast related injuries are 60-80 percent likely to also have traumatic brain injuries.

Some patients and clinicians think that the terms associated with TBI - mild, moderate and severe - refer to the severity of symptoms associated with the injury. The truth is these terms refer to the actual nature of the injury. When considering the nature of the injury use the following definitions:

- Mild traumatic brain injury is defined as a loss or alteration of consciousness < 30 minutes, post-traumatic amnesia < 24 hours, focal neurologic deficits that may or may not be transient, and/or Glasgow Coma Score

(GCS) of 13-15.

- Moderate traumatic brain injuries entail loss of consciousness > 30 minutes, post-traumatic amnesia > 24 hours, and an initial GCS 9-12.
- Severe brain injuries entail all of the moderate criteria listed above, but with a GCS < 9.

This confusion in defining TBI led to a number of active-duty and reserve-component soldiers, as well as Veterans, being denied Purple Heart awards for concussive or mild TBIs.

Active-duty and reserve-component soldiers must resubmit through their chains of command. Veterans should submit packages directly to Army Human Resources Command. They can

obtain copies of their deployment orders from the Veteran's Inquiry Branch by emailing veterans@conus.army.mil. Veterans will also need to submit their DD Form 214. More information on submission requirements is available at Army Human Resources Command.



Texas Veterans Commission reaches out to college campuses across Texas

By Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Since the U.S. Congress passed the expanded benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008, the number of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans returning to colleges and universities across Texas has increased substantially. Many universities are working to ensure their campus is Veteran-friendly and equipped with the proper support needed for these student Veterans.

In the month of September,

the Texas Veterans Commission participated in five college campus visits to reach out to the student Veteran population and speak to them one-on-one to make sure they are well aware of the benefits they have earned and deserve. The visits included University of Texas-Austin (UT), University of Texas-San Antonio, Texas State University, Central Texas Community College, and Austin Community College.

Also, on September 7, UT

hosted the 1st Annual Student Veterans Banquet with over 200 Veterans in attendance. The free event offered a complimentary dinner and an opportunity to meet other UT student Veterans. Derek Blumke, the founder of Student Veterans of America and now with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, was the keynote speaker and addressed the student Veterans during the banquet.

The Texas Veterans Commission was also on hand to provide

information ranging from filing disability claims to looking for employment.

The Texas Veterans Commission will continue to conduct college campus visits throughout the school year and will be at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the beginning of October.

If you would like to invite the Texas Veterans Commission to your college campus, please contact Bonnie Fletcher at 512-463-6834.

Veteran news around the web

Military Job Fair draws 75 employers

<http://www.ksat.com/jobs/29234098/detail.html>

Local organizations help military Veterans find work

<http://borderzine.com/2011/09/local-organizations-help-military-veterans-find-work/>

Deadline to apply for Retroactive Stop-Loss Pay nears

<http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=14807>

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

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2169>

Marine receives Medal of Honor at White House

http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/09/15/marine.medal.of.honor/index.html?&hpt=hp_c2

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>

