

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

# JOURNAL

FALL  
2011



*Military servicemembers render honors as fire and rescue workers unfurl a huge American flag over the side of the Pentagon during rescue and recovery efforts following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack.*





## FALL IN LINE

U.S. Navy Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Rick D. West performs a personnel inspection on Sailors attending school at the Navy Medicine Training Center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 6, 2011. West was touring the new school which was previously located at Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Abraham Essenmacher/Released)

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

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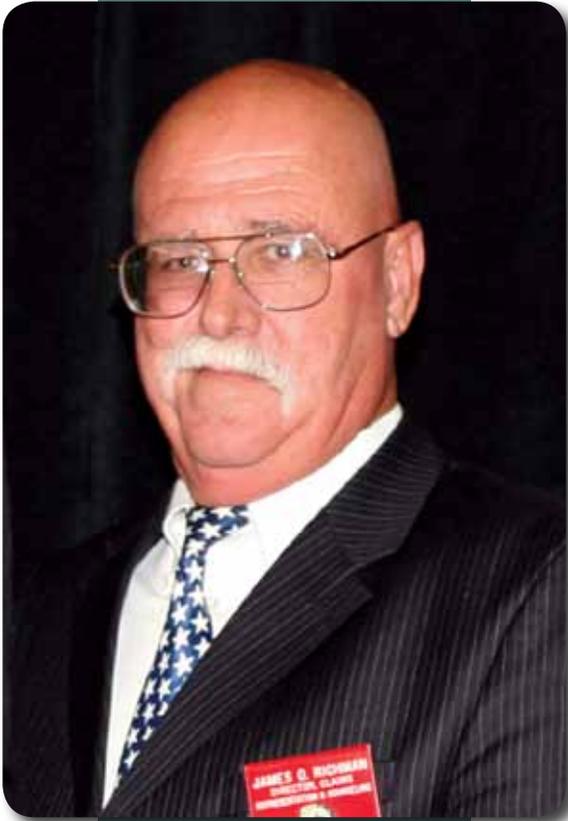
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On November 11, 1919, Armistice Day was commemorated for the first time. President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the day should be “filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory.” Those words are as appropriate today as they were then.

This Veterans Day, we passed the tenth year since the horrific attack on September 11, 2001, and I would like to share with you a letter I wrote to TVC Claims staff as the Waco Regional Director on September 18, 2001. While it specifically addresses the events of that fateful day, it also applies to Veterans every day and especially on Veterans Day.

Due to the unspeakable events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, our hearts are wounded both individually and as a nation. Our wounds will heal; they always do, but we will remember the pain and with that always comes our mighty resolve. It is said that George Washington stated, as he crossed the Delaware, “Let no one but Americans stand guard tonight.” We, as Veterans, have “stood guard” and realize what is likely to come in the near future; and because of the nature of this present enemy, who knows how long it will last or where our troops will once again be “in harms way”. Those in the Texas Veterans Commission who are not Veterans play just as vital a role, in that their service to the Veterans through their daily work is just as important as every other job in the agency.

We, as the Texas Veterans Commission, should collectively strive to do an even better job than we have ever done before and re-ignite our passion for what we do and why we do it. We serve a noble clientele. They served and sacrificed in Bastogne, Iwo Jima, the Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh and in every other corner of the world to include peacetime here in the States. No one claim is more important than any other, and each and every one deserves our very best effort.

I think it goes without saying, those presently on active duty are going to take the righteous indignation of this country to those who perpetrated this atrocity on an unsuspecting, innocent and defenseless civilian population. Let all of us once again “stand guard” by rededicating ourselves to our mission and providing the utmost service possible to our current Veteran clientele, and prepare ourselves to serve and honor those who now become this nation’s most fearsome weapon.

There are so many battles, so much sacrifice, and so much valor that deserve our attention on Veterans Day, and every day. During this Veterans Day let us pause to reflect on those who have and continue to sacrifice for our nation. I hope this letter serves as a reminder to each of us that we should collectively strive to be even more diligent and re-ignite our passion for whatever role we have in assisting Veterans, and why we do it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Richman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jim Richman,  
Director, Claims Counseling and Representation



**TEXAS VETERANS  
COMMISSION**

The Texas Veterans Commission is the State agency serving the needs of our Veterans and their families. Its purpose is to serve Texas Veterans, their dependents or survivors in all matters pertaining to Veterans' benefits and rights. The Texas Veterans Commission administers four programs: (1) Claims Representation & Counseling, (2) Veterans Employment Services, (3) Veterans Education, and (4) the Fund for Veterans' Assistance. Through these programs, TVC helps obtain state and federal Veterans' benefits, such as compensation, pension, death benefits, employment assistance, educational assistance, hospitalization and outpatient care, as well as numerous other benefits and privileges.

# EVERYONE SOMEONE SOMEONE



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CALIF

Every day the men and women who have served and sacrificed themselves for our country come through the door of the Texas Veterans Commission seeking some form of assistance. These include the new heroes from current conflicts, as well as heroes from the previous era. One such individual is Clifford W. Kuykendall.

Kuykendall, 86, recently visited the Texas Veterans Commission Claims office in Wichita Falls to ask for assistance for entry into an assisted living facility. Lucy Carracedo, Texas Veterans Commission Claims Counselor, assisted him, but had difficulty assessing his status. Kuykendall kept insisting that he receives a pension, but during the interview Carracedo realized that he had never applied to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to receive compensation.

Carracedo began gathering the forms she would need to file for Kuykendall's compensation claim. The pension he had been referring to was military medically retired pension. While inputting his data into case management system, Carracedo asked for his period of service.

"Which one? World War II, Korea, or the Civil Service?" Kuykendall replied. "I was a Prisoner Of War [POW] in WWII. I was shot and hurt in Korea during the Battle for the 38th Parallel as a member of Task Force Smith and almost lost my left leg, and I was stabbed when I worked for the Civil Service."

Kuykendall told Carracedo his story from the time he entered service. While still in high school, Kuykendall spoke with a hometown Seaman who told him only the elite get into submarine service and "they also get all the girls." Kuykendall liked the uniform, so he took the entrance exam and had his name

Photo from the Naval Historical Center

# FEEDS FEET ETIMIE

Story by Lucy Carracedo and Rachel Howell,  
Texas Veterans Commission, Wichita Falls & Austin

placed on a waiting list. Immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he was called up. Since he was only 17, he had to get his older sister's permission.

Kuykendall's assignment to the USS Tullibee, the last Gato-class boat, would prove to be a testament to his survival. During Operation Desecrate One, part of the preparedness for the operation for the Allied invasion of Western New Guinea in World War II, the USS Tullibee went down. Kuykendall, the sole survivor, was picked up out of the ocean and taken captive by the Japanese destroyer Wakatake. When he was picked up, he had broken and missing teeth, shrapnel and bullet grazes, and one live ammo round lodged in his left thigh. The interrogations and beatings began immediately.

Three months later, Kuykendall was taken from Palau to Saipan and Yokosuka before arriving at the Japanese Ofuna Navy Interrogation Camp. There he met another POW, Maj. Gregory "Pappy" Boyington. At one point, Maj. Boyington held him down while a Japanese medic removed the bullet from his infected thigh, without anesthesia. Later Kuykendall returned the favor, holding Maj. Boyington down while he was attended to. Maj. Boyington would later receive a Medal of Honor for his actions against enemy Japanese forces during WWII.

After several months, Kuykendall was transferred to the Ashio Labor Camp where he and other POW's mined copper. The camp was liberated in 1945 after Japan surrendered. Kuykendall was repatriated weighing only 90 pounds, a drastic reduction from his previous weight of 160. He was just 21 years old.

After spending several months in hospitals recuperating, Kuykendall returned to active

duty until the end of his enlistment and, as a Chief, was released from the Navy. His restless nature would not allow him to settle down as a civilian, and he attempted to re-enlist in the Navy. After being told he would lose his rank because he had been out for over 90 days, Kuykendall enlisted in the Army Reserve. After spending a few months working in a recruiter's office, Kuykendall joined the regular Army and went to jump school.

Another crisis erupted, this time in Korea, with the Battle for the 38th Parallel. He volunteered for Task Force Smith, the first ground clash between the invading North Korean and the defending U.S. forces. One of its soldiers became the first ground battle death of the Korean War, and Kuykendall was shot and almost lost his left leg. He spent three years in a military hospital recuperating and rehabilitating and was then medically retired.

Still restless and realizing that he preferred the service over civilian life, he joined Civil Service as a guard in Maryland. While on duty there, he was stabbed after being attacked by three people who breached the perimeter and were engaged in hostile activity. At this point he was offered Civil Service disability retirement and took it.

Through the years, Kuykendall never thought to apply for benefits until meeting Carracedo in 2011. Kuykendall, who has given so much to our country, was now in Carracedo's office asking for assistance and as he put it "everyone needs someone sometimes--always." He picked the right people, the right organization, Texas Veterans Commission. 🇺🇸

*Ed. Note: At the time of publication, Kuykendall's claim was being processed by the VA.*



Photos provided by Lucy Carracedo, Texas Veterans Commission, Wichita Falls

Above: Clifford Kuykendall in his Navy uniform during World War II.

Below: Clifford Kuykendall poses in front of his nursing home door in August 2011.





*Photos provided by Larry Witthar, Texas Veterans Commission, Amarillo*

Above: The gravestone that was placed on Sgt. Keith Rowell's grave through generous donations and the support of the Texas Veterans Commission.  
Right: Sgt. Keith Rowell's high school senior picture before he joined the U.S. Army.



# Unfinished Business

*Story by Larry Witthar & Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission,  
Amarillo & Austin*

Around July, Gary Rowell and his wife Ginger came into Texas Veterans Commission Claims Counselor Larry Witthar's office in Amarillo, Texas, to file a claim for a grave marker for his brother, Sgt. Keith Rowell.

Sgt. Rowell was born in Phillips, Texas, on Nov. 10, 1942. When Sgt. Rowell was 13 his father died leaving Gary, his older brother, and Judy, his younger sister. His mother wanted to continue to raise her family in the country, so she put the cropland to pasture and ran cattle on their place out of Mobeetie, Texas.

After graduating from Mobeetie High School, he married and attended West Texas State University in Canyon, Texas. At 24, he enlisted in the U.S. Army on April 5, 1966.

Sgt. Rowell was killed in action in Vietnam on Aug. 25, 1968 and was laid to rest by his father in Silverton, Texas. Keith's wife remarried 90 days after his death, and the Rowell's lost touch with her. His burial flag, his uniform and medals along with his personal effects were lost as well. His grave was not marked with a military marker.

It was obvious that along with the military grave marker, there was a lot of unfinished business.

"The project seemed to take on a life of its own. One of those God things that is meant to be," said Witthar.

Witthar applied for a military marker with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), but the claim was denied, as the VA said that unmarked graves before 1990 were ineligible for new markers.

Determined to help the family, Witthar got a donation, and the Rowell family paid the rest for the marker.

A Procession and Grave Marker Unveiling Ceremony immediately began to take shape. Eight soldiers from the 3rd Battalion of the 506th

Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division (3-506) who were with him in Vietnam wanted to come to the ceremony, and a reception was also arranged.

Friday evening, Oct. 21, 2011, 42 people attended the remembrance at West Texas A&M University (WTAMU), Coronette Library, where family and soldiers relived times and emotions that had been buried for 43 years.

On the following morning, a 20-passenger limousine, donated by another Veteran, brought the family to the patio of the Coronette Library where two bagpipers led them to the front. The Commemorative Air Force opened the Ceremony with a fly-over. Dr. J. Pat O'Brian, President of WTAMU welcomed those in attendance and offered words of honor and inspiration to the hundred gathered.

Included in the procession to Silverton, Texas, were 171 riders from the Blue Knights, the Patriot Guard (both Texas and New Mexico), VFW Riders – Pampa, the American Legion Riders – Amarillo, and many others who wanted to honor Sgt. Rowell. The procession making the 60 mile trip to Silverton stretched for a half mile.

The emotional ceremony at the cemetery included a bugler who played taps, a rifle team who offered a 21-gun salute, and a eulogy given by a retired chaplain from the 101st Airborne who was in Vietnam.

What started out to be a simple 10 minute claim turned out to be an opportunity to honor a fallen soldier from long ago and to show the Panhandle community that the Texas Veterans Commission motto of "Helping Veterans starts here" is a serious commitment and can take on a life of its own. 🇺🇸

# The New Generation of Veterans

Story by Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

## Veterans Day

World War I officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles in France. Fighting had ceased seven months earlier when an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.”

In November 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day. An Act approved May 13, 1938, by the U.S. Congress made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday and known as “Armistice Day.” In 1954, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of the Veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word “Armistice” and inserting in its place the word “Veterans.” With the approval of this legislation on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American Veterans of all wars.

## Newest Veterans

Jarod Myers, a U.S. Army Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) combat Veteran, is part of the newer generation of Veterans who will be honored on Veterans Day. He has seen how past generations have paved the way for his genera-

tion so that Veterans are welcomed home and honored for their services and sacrifices

“Older generation Veterans have fought for years to make sure that we have access to the benefits that were inaccessible to them,” said Myers. “They have provided us a platform from which to speak and given us a voice to be heard as well as motivate the OIF/OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) Veterans to shoulder the responsibility of supporting those who will answer future calls to support and defend our nation.”

## Tour of Duty

In 2002, Myers graduated high school and days later said goodbye to Columbia City, Ind., to join the U. S. Army and become an Infantryman. After serving for two years, Myers found himself deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

During a routine patrol one day, Myers encountered a suicide bomber that left him with serious injuries to his legs and back. After being medically retired in 2005, Myers left the military and spent almost five years readjusting and finding his place back in the civilian world.

## A Veteran Serving Veterans

Myers knew his service to his country was important and felt he could use his passion for

the military and his experience in combat to help other Veterans returning to civilian life.

Myers is now the Regional Veterans Outreach Coordinator for Bluebonnet Trails Community Health Center which offers mental health and developmental disability services to children, adolescents and adults.

“My current job gives me purpose and it allows me to continue to mentor and serve in a way that fulfills me,” said Myers.

Myers is very active in the Veteran community and took part in multiple ceremonies within his community for Veterans Day.

“As an OIF combat Veteran, Veterans Day is an important day because it’s doesn’t matter whether you’re a WWII, Vietnam, or OIF/OEF Veteran, we all share a common bond of service and it is one that can never be forgotten,” said Myers.

## Support System

Today, our newest generation of Veterans is continuing to take initiative and create a rock solid support system for the servicemembers transitioning into civilian life.

There are hundreds of Veterans and military civic organizations around the country geared toward the newly returning OIF/OEF Veterans.

One example is Mental Health America of Greater Dallas, which operates Operation

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*Photo provided by Jarod Myers*

Dillion Cannon, a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom who is paralyzed from the chest down, attends the Houston Rodeo with Jarod Myers, also a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Healthy Reunions and provides referrals to mental health services through family and individual counseling for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injuries.

Another example is the Soldier Support project through Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR) of Tarrant County, which expands access to needed services to Veterans and their families, including hard-to-reach populations such as homeless and OIF/OEF Veterans.

Both Mental Health America of Greater Dallas and MHMR of Tarrant County have been awarded grants by the Fund for Veterans' Assistance to specifically help OIF/OEF Veterans. It is organizations like these that are making the transition process less intimidating for the newer generation of Veterans coming back into the civilian world. Many of these organizations are started by the younger generation of Veterans that want to make a better place for the newer Veterans transitioning back into civilian life.

"Volunteer to support a Veteran's cause or program," said Myers. "One of the greatest tragedies in a Veteran's life is being forgotten for the sacrifices that were given so freely on behalf of his or her freedom." 🇺🇸

*Photo provided by Jarod Myers*

Jarod Myers, a Veteran of Iraqi Freedom, meets with Sgt. 1st Class Williams of Fort Knox, Ky., at the Heroes Night Out Kentucky Annual Picnic where over 600 Wounded Warriors and their families were fed.



# Deadline for some Agent Orange cases approaches

By Dale Moyer,  
Texas Veterans Commission, Waco

Because of the court decision in *Nehmer v. the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs* (VA), the VA was required to finalize all claims related to this litigation involving living Veterans by September 30 and deceased Veterans' claims by Dec. 30, 2011.

The *Nehmer* court case originated in 1986 as a class-action lawsuit against the VA by Vietnam Veterans and their survivors, who alleged that VA had improperly denied their claims for service-connected compensation for disabilities allegedly caused by exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange in service.

In 1989, the United States District Court for the Northern District of California (Court) ruled that VA's regulation was invalid and voided all benefit denials made under that regulation.

In May 1991, the *Nehmer* parties entered into a "Final Stipulation and Order" (Final Stipulation) outlining the actions to be taken in response to the Court's decision. Among other things, the Final Stipulation provided: (1) that VA would issue new regulations in accordance with the Agent Orange Act of 1991; (2) that, after issuing such regulations, VA would re-adjudicate the claims where a prior denial was voided by the Court's 1989 order and would initially adjudicate all similar claims filed subsequent to the Court's order; and (3) that, if benefits were awarded upon such readjudication or adjudication, the effective date of the award would be the later of the date the claim was filed or the date the disability arose.

In a February 1999 decision, the Court clarified the scope of its 1989 decision. It voided all VA decisions that were issued while the invalid regulation was in effect and which denied service connection for a Vietnam Veteran's disease that was later found to be associated with herbicide exposure under new regulations. In December 2000, the Court provided further clarification when it concluded that VA must pay the full retroactive benefit to the estates of deceased class members.

On Oct. 13, 2009, the VA announced Secretary Erik Shinseki's decision to establish presumptive service connection for three additional illnesses associated with exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam based on an independent study conducted by the Insti-

tute of Medicine. The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B-cell leukemias (such as hairy cell leukemia), Parkinson's disease, and ischemic heart disease. A proposed rule adding these three conditions to VA's list of presumptive diseases was published in the Federal Register on March 25, 2010, 75 Fed. Reg. 14,391.

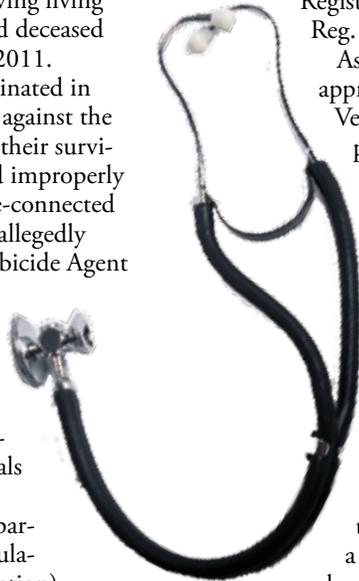
As of Sept. 20, 2010, there were approximately 145,000 Vietnam Veterans and survivors who were previously denied service-connection or who filed new claims. All of these claims must be adjudicated/readjudicated in order to comply with the Final *Nehmer* Stipulation.

At present, of the 13 VA Regional Offices processing *Nehmer* cases, only six, including Waco, are handling those cases involving living Veterans. Because of the volume of the backlog and the requirement that cases be finalized within a specified time frame, the VA

has authorized the Waco Regional Office to transfer *Nehmer* cases to the other Regional offices that were exclusively handling the death cases. Guidelines for the *Nehmer* cases are updated or changed quite frequently; as a result, constant training and/or retraining is required.

Due to time restrictions that are in place for completing the *Nehmer* cases, it has become a common practice for the Regional offices to process an interim grant (for the living Veterans) based on evidence already of record, if possible. An "at once" examination is then requested to determine the current level of disability. If the Veteran does not have a diagnosis of Ischemic Heart Disease but is diagnosed with another heart condition, an examination with an opinion would be required to determine if the two conditions are related.

Those Regional Offices that are working *Nehmer* cases have been restricted to only *Nehmer* claims. The only exceptions are terminal, hardship, or homeless cases. The Veterans Service Center personnel at the various Regional Offices are doing their best to complete the *Nehmer* cases as quickly and accurately as possible. For more information on the *Nehmer* cases, please contact the Waco office at [waco@tvc.state.tx.us](mailto:waco@tvc.state.tx.us).



# Retired Texas Veterans Commission employee passes

By Brenda Branch,  
Texas Veterans Commission, Waco

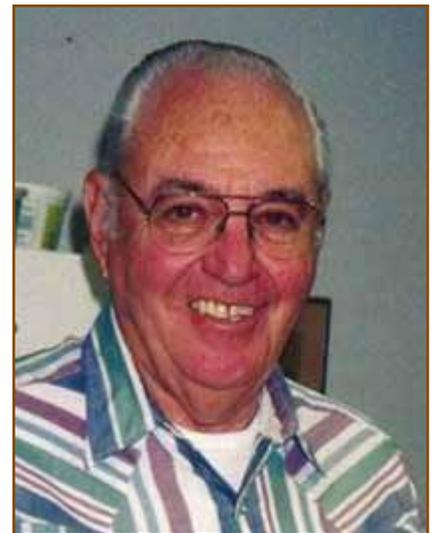
Jimmy C. Toler, a retired Texas Veterans Commission employee, went to his final resting place on Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2011.

He began his service to our country in the U.S. Navy. He enlisted on Sept. 13, 1951, and was discharged on March 8, 1955.

Mr. Toler began his career with the Texas Veterans Commission in May 1970 as a Service Officer at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, Waco, and in 1981, was promoted to Regional Office Supervisor and transferred to the Waco Regional Office.

He was an accredited representative of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and AMVETS. Mr. Toler proudly served his fellow Veterans, dependants, and their survivors for 29½ years before retiring on Aug. 31, 1995.

Survivors include his daughter, Lori Holle, who is employed at the Texas Veterans Commission Waco Regional Office, and husband Stuart; son, Larry Toler; grandson, Aaron Toler; brother, Donald Toler and wife Dora; and his wife, caregiver and mother of his children, Faye Toler.



# GI Bill affects student Veterans for fall semester

By Rachel Howell,  
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Post-9/11 GI Bill took effect. This latest round of changes makes the Post-9/11 GI Bill as flexible as the previous versions, opening new doors for Veterans who are not interested in a traditional education.

In order to expand eligibility and ensure that the Post-9/11 GI Bill offers the same types of benefits as older versions of the program, the U.S. Congress had to reduce the costs by trimming other aspects of the program.

October's changes now allow eligible students to pay for more education and training costs with the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Programs not leading to college degrees, including programs offered at schools that don't grant degrees, are eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill funding. Flight programs, correspondence training, on-the-job and apprenticeship training also are covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill now provides a reduced housing allowance to students not on active duty who are enrolled solely in distance learning and allows students on active duty to

receive a stipend for books and supplies.

Some of the reductions in the program include prorating the monthly housing allowance based on the number of credit hours being taken, establishing a cap of \$17,500 in annual tuition and fees for private and foreign schools, and eliminating payment of benefits during school breaks.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010, which President Barack Obama signed into law January 4 of this year, set forth three sets of Post-9/11 GI Bill changes. Some of the provisions of the act took effect in March and August such as expanding the Post-9/11 GI Bill to include Active Service performed by National Guard members and limiting active duty members to the net cost for tuition and fees prorated based on the eligibility tiers (40%-100%) previously established for Veterans.

The Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Education Program monitors the GI Bill benefit in Texas for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. A list of approved schools and programs can be found at <https://services.tvc.state.tx.us/VETRPT/>.

## Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 Final Changes

**Non-college degree programs offered at non-degree granting schools:** Pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees or \$17,500, whichever is less. Also pays up to \$83 per month for books and supplies

**On-the-job and apprenticeship training:** Pays a monthly benefit amount prorated based on time in program and up to \$83 per month for books and supplies

**Flight programs:** Per academic year, pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees assessed by the school or \$10,000, whichever is less

**Correspondence training:** Per academic year, pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees assessed by the school or \$8,500, whichever is less

**Housing allowance for distance learning:** Payable to students (other than those on active duty) enrolled solely in distance learning. The housing allowance payable is equal to 1/2 the national average Basic Allowance for Housing for an E-5 with dependents. The full-time rate for an individual eligible at the 100% eligibility tier would be \$673.50 for 2011

**Active duty stipend:** Students on active duty will now receive a books and supplies stipend

# San Jacinto College opens three Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success in Houston

By Melanie A. Moynahan  
Texas Veterans Commission, Houston

Recently, San Jacinto Community College in the Houston area received a grant from the U. S. Department of Education to open a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success on their three Houston area campuses. The three year grant with an approximate award of \$398,000 will fund the new centers.

These centers will provide Veterans with a central point to receive services including:

- Financial Aid Applications
- Assisting with Hazlewood Act Benefits
- Certification for Veterans Benefits
- Academic Planning
- To provide a safe environment for service members to share student and military experiences
- Additional services will be added over time and as needed

The space is allocated specifically to address all Veterans needs and provide them with specific people to help answer questions and provide guidance. Because of the addition of the space through the grant, San Jacinto College is also able to hire three Veter-



Photo provided by Melanie Moynahan

Veterans Student Success Coordinators: Taiwan Johnson-South Campus, Melanie Neill-North Campus, Alexander Sanchez-Central Campus

ans Student Success Coordinators and 11 students through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Work Study Assistants program. These centers are expected to be operational by the fall 2012 semester.

The Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success are one component of San Jacinto College's overall military-supportive approach to serving students. The new Veteran Success Coordinators are also part of the Veteran's Education Network (VEN) at the college. Established in the fall of 2009, the VEN is a network of qualified staff specifically identified and trained to assist Veteran students. VEN members participate in training geared toward Veteran education issues, and they can be found in various student services positions across the campuses. The VEN members are there to disseminate information and provide services such as academic advising, counseling and disability services to Veterans.

The Texas Veterans Commission has approved programs at San Jacinto Community College for Veterans to use their GI Bill benefits. For more information about those programs, please visit [www.tvc.state.tx.us/about/education](http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/about/education).

# Employers recognized for hiring Veterans

By Duncan McGhee,  
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

AUSTIN– The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) recognized five businesses as leaders in hiring Texas Veterans during the awards ceremony held September 15 at its statewide training conference in Houston.

Together, the five employers filled 357 positions during the year and 39% of those (140) were Veterans. The awards fall into five categories: Large Employer (251+ employees), Medium Employer (51-250 employees), Small Employer (50 or fewer employees), Disabled Veteran Employer and National Employer.

These companies seek a competitive edge by capitalizing on the unique skills, training and leadership experience of Texas Veterans.

The Lowe's store in Granbury, Texas, is one of the employers honored for excellence in hiring and retaining Veterans. This store has a Texas workforce of 133, of those 47% are Veterans; last year, 91% of the 47 employees they hired were Veterans.

"Veterans have served our country so who better to serve our customers?" said Clay Rush, Lowe's Store Manager in Granbury, Texas.

"These employers see Veterans as critical to their business's success," says Thomas Palladino, Executive Director of the Texas Veterans Commission. "These awards recognize their outstanding commitment to Veterans who have served our country with courage and honor."

According to recent data provided by the Department of Labor, Texas has helped more Veterans get jobs than any other state in the country, with the Texas Veterans Commission assisting 38,714 Veterans enter the workforce in the most recent 12-month period.

Employers interested in hiring Veterans can contact the Texas Veterans Commission at (512) 463-6564. 🇺🇸



**Chairman's Award**

Carl Baker, Business Excellence Senior Manager at the San Antonio site of the Boeing Company.



**National Employer**

Darren Telford (HR Manager) and Richard Warehime (Industrial Engineer), Cooper Tire and Rubber, and Jeff Mott, LVER Region III.



**Large Employer**

Roger Williams, Director of Amarillo Site Operations Bell Helicopter, Marshal Green, LVER Region V.



**Medium Employer**

Clay Rush, Store Manager 2225, Lowe's of Granbury TX, Robin Greer, LVER Region III.



**Small Employer**

Earl Conley, US Army Sergeant Major. (Ret), Area Human Resources Manager, Houston, TX, Securitas Security Services USA, Inc Marshal Green, LVER Region V.



**Disabled Veteran Employer**

Floyd Brigham, HazMart Pharmacy, Project Manager, Topflite Environmental Services, Larry Denton, LVER Region V.

*All Photos by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin*

In every picture: Shawn Deabay, Director of the Texas Veterans Commission Employment Services, Marianne Rogers, Chair of the Texas Veterans Commission Employment Advisory Committee, and T.P. O'Mahoney, Chair of the Texas Veterans Commission.

## 2nd Annual Employer Award Recipients

**Chairman's Award:**

The Boeing Company

**National Employer:**

Cooper Tire and Rubber, Texas

**Large Employer:**

Bell Helicopter, Amarillo, Texas

**Medium Employer:**

Lowe's, Granbury, Texas

**Small Employer:**

Securitas Security, Amarillo, Texas

**Disabled Veteran Employer:**

Topflite Environmental Services, Dyess AFB, Texas

# Fund for Veterans' Assistance presents Community Partnership Award for Distinguished Service to Texas Veterans at Fall Conference

By Doug Rozunick,  
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

For the first time, at the 64th Annual Fall Training Conference held in Houston, Texas, the Texas Veterans Commission recognized excellence in grant performance by showcasing its top grantees. Out of the 58 current Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) grantees, just two organizations were recognized with the Community Partnership Award for Distinguished Service to Texas Veterans. The awards were presented to the recipients during the closing ceremony of the training conference before approximately 500 Texas Veterans Commission staff and Veteran County Service Officers.

The organizations selected were the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County and the Child Crisis Center of El Paso.

In addition to exceeding their performance goals and demonstrating superior stewardship of FVA funds, these organizations met all administrative requirements and were identified as having best practices during on-site monitoring visits.

"These two grantee organizations present the true spirit of excellence and commitment to Texas Veterans and their families in times of need. They are able to touch Veterans' lives in the communities where they live," said Bill



Photo by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Community Partnership Award for Distinguished Service to Texas Veterans: United Way of San Antonio Pictured: Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director of TVC, Gen. Thomas Smith, Chair of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance Advisory Committee, Jeff Vance, Senior Vice President, 2-1-1 Operations & Administration, United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, Art Anthony, Senior Military Outreach Coordinator/Disaster Services Liaison, United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, Ricardo Wade, Military Outreach Coordinator, United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, T.P. O'Mahoney, Chair of TVC, and Bill Wilson, Director of the TVC Fund for Veterans' Assistance.

Wilson, the FVA Director.

Receiving the award for the United Way of San Antonio was Jeff Vance, Vice-President of 2-1-1 Operations, with Ricardo Wade and Art Anthony, Military Outreach Coordinators. 2-1-1 is a 24-hour hotline that provides information and referrals for a variety of social service and outreach programs. Additionally, the Military Outreach Coordinators are specifically dedicated to assisting the military and their families with unmet needs.

"We may be the tip of the spear, providing information, referrals, advocacy and follow-up when necessary; however, ultimately our success is contingent upon fostering good partnerships to ensure timely access to services and determine if needs were met" said Wade.

Receiving the award for Child Crisis Cen-

ter of El Paso was Alfonso Velarde, Executive Director.

"Providing supportive services to military families and Veterans is absolutely essential in a military city like El Paso, Texas" said Velarde. "Over 68,000 military personnel and their families are stationed at Ft. Bliss."

The Child Crisis Center serves as an extended family when extended deployments, PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, family strife, spousal isolation and other crises common to military families create an unhealthy family environment and the family finds itself in need of assistance.

"In the past year, nearly 300 military families were provided supportive assistance and 117 children of Veterans were provided emergency shelter services, all possible because of funding from TVC," said Velarde.

The Texas Veterans Commission and the Fund for Veterans Assistance are proud to partner with and assist agencies that strive to achieve excellence in their respective fields of community service. For more information about the Fund for Veterans' Assistance, please visit [www.tvc.state.tx.us/help](http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/help).



Photo by Rachel Howell, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Community Partnership Award for Distinguished Service to Texas Veterans: Child Crisis Center of El Paso. Pictured: Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director of the Texas Veterans Commission, Gen. Thomas Smith, Chair of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance Advisory Committee, Al Velarde, Executive Director of the Child Crisis Center of El Paso, T.P. O'Mahoney, Chair of the Texas Veterans Commission, and Bill Wilson, Director of the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance.

# Message from the President of the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas, Tracy Little

Greetings! As the newly elected President of the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas, I would like to extend my appreciation to our Past President, Tim Vasquez, and all who preceded him in making this Association what it is today. I vow to continue to uphold the torch that has been handed off to me and to ensure that the Association continues to grow and prosper.

My hat's off to the Texas Veterans Commission for providing another information-packed agenda for our recent Fall Conference which took place September 12 – 15, 2011, in Houston, Texas. Training was great, the location superb and as always, the camaraderie was Priceless! The projected training sites for next year's Spring and Fall Conferences will be posted on the VCSOAT website as soon as it becomes available. I look forward to seeing you at one of the conferences next year.

Please welcome your newly elected officers. They are:

- Tracy Little, President
- Les Cooks, Vice President
- Laura Spain, Secretary
- James Henderson, Treasurer
- Vincent Morrison, Judge Advocate
- Kathryn Fasci, Chaplain

**Regional Directors & Assistants:**

- Dallas: Don Phillips, Denton Co. & Yolanda Williams, Dallas Co.
- El Paso: Joe Rickey, Ector Co. & Hugh Scanlin, Jeff Davis Co.
- East Texas: Dave Cantu, Harris Co. & Hilary Guest, Jefferson Co.
- Amarillo: Vacant & Vacant
- West Texas: Laura Serrano, Tom Green Co. & Mary Jo Schaffer, Bandera Co.
- South Texas: Emilio de los Santos, Hidalgo Co. & Melissa Castillo, Bexar Co.
- Central Texas: Billy Murphy, Brown Co. & Valerie Zimmerman, Williamson Co.

Congratulations are in order to all those who received awards in recognition of their outstanding service, by their respective Regional

Directors. The highest award, the Dan Garcia Memorial Achievement Award, was bestowed upon Mr. Vincent Morrison, Harris County. In recognition of his faithful service, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, presented a Proclamation to Vince highlighting the more than 25 years of service as the Service Officer for Harris County, as a National Service Officer with the Paralyzed Veterans of America, National Service Officer for the AMVETS, and for his appointment to serve on the Selective Service System as a local board member for the State of Texas, to name a few. Job Well Done!



One of my goals is to get out and visit some of the “less travelled” counties to meet with you and to discuss the goals and initiatives that you have for your areas. I recently visited Wise County and attended the Wise County Veterans Council Picnic. There was great food, good fun, and numerous door prizes—in fact, I was lucky enough to win one, and no, it was not rigged! It was a fun time for all and the local Veterans were very appreciative. Please let me know what events you have planned in your areas and I will try to make it out your way. I look forward to hearing from you.

Tracy Little, President

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”

(J.F. Kennedy, Frankfurt, 6/25/63)



## Veterans County Service Officer wins Dan Garcia Award

Vincent Morrison received the Dan Garcia Memorial Achievement Award from the Veterans County Service Officers Association of Texas (VCSOAT) at the Texas Veterans Commission 64th Annual Training Conference in Houston on Sept. 13, 2011. This award was presented in recognition of sustained superior performance and outstanding achievement, commit-

ment, and dedication to Veterans and their families and is the highest of six levels of awards given by the VCSOAT.

Pictured: Commissioners Steve Radack, Jack Mormon, Veterans County Service Officer Vincent Morrison, Judge Ed Emmett, Commissioners El Franco Lee, and Jack Cagle. Photo provided by Morrison. 🇺🇸

*Defending Liberty and Freedom*

# VETERANS DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

11.11.11



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AUSTIN, TEXAS  
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# TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION JOURNAL

Volume 34, Issue 4, Fall 2011

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