She Served, She Deserves

The Women Veterans Health Program is making dramatic progress in enhancing women's health care at VA facilities.

Women constitute nearly 15 percent of today's active duty troops and represent the fastest growing subpopulation of the U.S. military. Correspondingly, women are enrolling in the VA health care system at record levels. Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom have added 100,000 women veterans to the rolls. Based on Department of Defense active duty rosters, the number of women veterans will continue to climb.

Understandably, most VA health care facilities were built with men in mind. For decades, the system was accustomed to serving mostly men—as recently as 1998; women represented only 4.4 percent of all veterans (see sidebar, "She Served So That We Could Live Free"). Now the landscape is changing and more women veterans, young and old, are turning to VA for health care.

The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group has set a goal of ensuring that all women veterans receive timely, equitable, high-quality health care services at VA facilities. This significant effort involves everything from the abstract—changing the perception that VA health facilities serve only men—to the concrete—making certain that facilities have the necessary women's health equipment and can offer women adequate privacy.

Specifically, the Women Veterans Health mission is to make certain that all eligible women veterans requesting VA care are assured of:

- Comprehensive primary care by a proficient and interested primary care provider;
- Privacy, security, dignity and sensitivity to gender-specific needs;
- The right care in the right place and time;
- State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology; and
- Highest quality preventive and clinical care, equal to the high levels of care provided to male veterans.

More of this article can be read at:
www.publichealth.va.gov/docs/womenshealth/MarchApril10VG_WVHistory_508c.pdf
Message from Deputy Secretary Barbara Ward

We are pleased to announce our plans for the third annual CalVet Women Veterans Conference which will be held October 7th and 8th at the Clovis Veterans Memorial Building. Our conference planning committee has been working diligently to identify speakers and topics for our general sessions and workshops. Please check out our conference page at: [www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/WVConference2010.aspx](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/WVConference2010.aspx), all details regarding the conference have been posted, including registration, lodging and program agenda. This year’s conference will be the best yet with a target audience of 300 attendees.

Over the past few months, we have witnessed the signing of U.S. Senate Bill 1963, which is referred to as the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Services Act of 2010. This historic piece of legislation includes significant provisions that address issues that are of importance to women veterans. These provisions are summarized on page XX of this newsletter for your convenience.

The Talbots Gift Card Program was launched in May and many cards have been distributed to eligible returning Operation Enduring Freedom / Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) women veterans who are transitioning back into the civilian workforce. Information regarding the eligibility criteria, distribution process and related forms are posted on our website at: [www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/Women.aspx](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/Women.aspx).

Our recent partnership with DeVry University is another project that will provide employment transition services to our women veterans. This “pilot” project will be officially launched on August 7th and will involve the offering of a series of free workshops at several DeVry University campuses. Workshops will focus on the following topics: Resume Writing and Interview Skills, Dress for Success, Financial Assistance, and Veterans Educational Benefits. Stay tune for more details in the coming weeks.

I will be attending the meeting of the Advisory Committee for Women Veterans and the VA Forum on Women Veterans in Washington D.C. later this month. Highlights from both meetings will be summarized in the next newsletter. I look forward to seeing each of you at this year’s CalVet Women Veterans Conference. Don’t forget to get your nominations in for the “Woman Veteran of the Year” Award.

Affordable Legal Services for Women Veterans

If you don’t know your rights, then you don’t have any rights. Most people can’t afford an attorney, don’t know where to find one, or the right one. Pre Paid Legal Services empowers individuals, families and small businesses by making access to the justice system affordable to all.

Remember, if you don’t know your rights, then you don’t have any rights!!

For more information, please contact: Cyndy Cservenyak, former California Air National Guard (562) 889-6344, ccservenyak@prepaidlegal.com, www.cyndy.prepaidlegal.com
UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY

July 26-31
VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans Meeting
Contact: Shannon Middleton
(202) 461-6193
Washington, DC

July 30
Veterans All-Hands Event
11:00am
Indian Health Council, Inc., Bldg. B
50100 Golsh Road
Valley Center, CA 92082
(760) 749-1410, Ext. 5331

AUGUST

August 20
Veterans All-Hands Event
11:00am
Southern Indian Health Council Inc.,
4058 Willows Road
Alpine, CA 91901
(619) 445-1188, Ext. 412

OCTOBER

October 7-8
CalVet Women Veterans Conference
Clovis Veterans Memorial Bldg.,
808 4th Street
Clovis, CA 93612
Contact: Barbara Ward
Deputy Secretary, (916) 653-2521

NOVEMBER

November 11
Veterans Day

Career Opportunity to Women Veterans

Business and Professional Women’s (BPW) Foundation is partnering with Walmart to recruit, hire and retain women veterans for retail management positions. This partnership embodies the commitment of BPW Foundation to support women veterans, their families and military spouses. It also highlights our vision to create successful workplaces for women, families and employers and Walmart as an employer of choice for women and veterans.

BPW Foundation invites you to apply for these select positions with Walmart or to share this invitation with an interested colleague. This hiring initiative targets women veterans who possess leadership skills and qualities that would make them excellent candidates for retail management. Prior retail experience is not required. We are looking to identify 10-15 candidates to interview for these select positions.

Information on Walmart Retail Management employment and position descriptions can be found at www.bpwfoundation.org.

Women Veterans Health Care

Did you know that women are the fastest growing group within the Veteran population? Learn more about the changing face of women Veterans and what the VA is doing to meet their health care needs.

This web site provides information on health care services available to women Veterans, including comprehensive primary care as well as specialty care such as reproductive services, rehabilitation, mental health, and treatment for military sexual trauma.

You can also find answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about women Veterans health care.

At each VA Medical Center nationwide, a Women Veterans Program Manager is designated to assist women Veterans. She can help coordinate all the services you may need, from primary care to medical services to Mental Health and Sexual Abuse Counseling.

Women Veterans who are interested in receiving care at VA should contact the nearest VA Medical Center and ask for the Women Veterans Program Manager.

www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth
CalVet Requests Nominations for Women Veteran of the Year 2010

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) invites the public to nominate local women veterans who have compiled a record of exemplary service as military service members, as veterans, and as outstanding members of the community for recognition as one of two 2010 CalVet Women Veterans of the Year. Two women veterans will be selected, one for Northern and one for Southern California. The CalVet Women Veterans of the Year will be officially recognized during the CalVet Women Veterans Conference taking place October 7th and 8th this year in Clovis, CA.

These awards are part of CalVet’s ongoing effort and commitment to respond to women veterans’ issues where women veterans live, work, and enjoy the freedoms of our great country, and to encourage greater participation in the annual women veterans’ conferences.

Nominations will be accepted from any California resident. CalVet especially encourages submissions from veterans, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), and other veterans groups. Completed nomination forms must be received by September 10, 2010.

The forms must be submitted in writing and the narrative explaining why the veteran is being nominated for the award may not exceed 500 words in length. Nominations that are not selected may be retained for future award consideration at the discretion of the committee.

Nomination forms are available online at [www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/WVConference2010.aspx](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/Resources/WVConference2010.aspx). Call (916) 653-2551 to have forms emailed, faxed, or mailed to you. Forms can be requested by mail at:

Women and Minority Veterans Affairs  
California Department of Veterans Affairs  
1227 O Street, Room 300  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Save the date!

3rd Annual CalVet Women Veterans Conference  
October 7-8, 2010  
Clovis Veterans Memorial Building  
808 4th Street  
Clovis, Ca 93612

For more information contact:  
Barbara Ward,  
Deputy Secretary, Women and Minority Veterans Affairs  
(916) 653-2327
Lucas

His name is Lucas and he is 3 years old. He and his grandfather Raul Sanchez came out to help with at the Fresno WE Connect Weekend event which focused on helping low-income families.

Lucas comes from generations of family serving in the military, including his great grandfather, his grandfather, and both his dad, Staff Sergeant Patrick Joseph Sanchez, and mom, Erica Whitaker. Both of his parents serve for the Army Reserve and Erica is currently serving. Lucas's dad passed away on May 8, 2008. Mr. Sanchez says Lucas is adjusting well and feels blessed to be able to help raise his grandson who reminds him so much of his son. They have fun spending time together, especially during their Monday and Tuesday pizza nights where Lucas gets to go out with his grandfather to pick up and pay for the pizza that has been ordered under his name. Mr. Sanchez says Lucas is a blessing in his life, that he is a happy and gracious boy.

Mr. Sanchez notes that it is so important for anyone who knows of a military child who has a lost a parent to reach out to them and spend time with them. That child will not have an opportunity to experience what it is like to be raised by their loved one but it makes a big difference when they have someone who is there for them.

Forgotten Angels

A Matter of Honor

By Ann P Meredith

A distinguished, timely and integral project, FORGOTTEN ANGELS helps to give a face and voice to women in the military from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq Afghanistan and at home while acknowledging and applauding women’s contributions.

ANGELS will speak to many whose stories have never been told: Women who served and now serve the military domestically and abroad and will include stories of dependent women and children of military families as we look at all the roles both past and present women have played in the U.S. Armed Forces.

ANGELS’S vision is to create a significant, historic and unprecedented nationally traveling Fine Art Exhibition, Documentary Film and Book Publication as we work with local, regional and national organizations in all communities who support women in active duty and veterans.

For more information on the Forgotten Angels Project visit: www.annpmeredith.com

About the artist:

Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas into a military family, Meredith’s father was a pilot and Lt. Colonel in the U.S Air Force, her Aunt from Dallas a radio operator in the US Navy in Korea and her mother worked for American Airlines. Meredith is a graduate of the University of California with a degree in The History of Art and a nationally and internationally acclaimed artist, writer, director, photographer and filmmaker. She has lived and worked throughout the United States, Mexico, Africa, China and Europe and has served as a judge for the EMMYS in News & Documentary.
One of the biggest challenges for our service members in transitioning back into civilian life is entering the workforce. Through her WE Support Program, First Lady Maria Shriver has partnered with Talbots to provide women veterans with gift cards to help them purchase professional attire.

Starting on May 17, 2010, the California Department of Veteran Affairs will begin distributing these gift cards through veteran program service providers across the state. Each gift card has a value of $200 that can be used in stores or online. This program targets women veterans who are recently separating from service and meet the eligibility criteria.

Veteran program service providers interested in requesting gift cards will need to first download the distribution process document below and follow the instructions. A Talbots Gift Card Monthly Tracking Form and Eligibility Criteria is also available below. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Ward at (916) 653-2327.

**Talbot’s Gift Cards Recipients:**


**Jessica Oliff,** 27, Army Police Officer, E-5, Active Duty 2003 – 2008, Disabled Veteran (Contact: (916) 606-8571), Single, lives in Orangevale and is seeking employment in the healthcare field. Referred by Daniel Barrows, LCSW, TBI/Polytrauma Social Worker, NA Northern Ca. HCS, Martinez, CA, (925) 372-2250.

**Mickiela Montoya,** 24, Army, E-4, Active Duty: 9/02 – 9/09, Single mother with a 2 y.o. daughter. Left service due to a lack of child care options. Referred by: April Jackson, Long Beach VAMC Case Manager, (562) 388-8121.
President Obama Signs Health Services Act

Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010
Pub. L. 111-163, Title II - Women Veterans Health Care Matters

Bill Highlights:

Section 201 mandates a study of barriers for women veterans to health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs by a qualified independent entity or organization. Four million dollars was appropriated to carry out this section.

Section 202 mandates the VA to carry out a program to provide graduate medical education, training, certification, and continuing medical education for mental health professionals who provide counseling, care, and services to veterans suffering from sexual trauma and post-traumatic stress.

Each of the VAs shall submit to Congress an annual report on the counseling, care, and services provided to veterans pursuant to this section containing:

- Number of mental health professionals, graduate medical education trainees, and primary care providers who have been certified under the program and the amount and nature of continuing medical education provided to such professionals, trainees, and providers who are certified.
- Number of women veterans who received counseling and care and services from professionals and providers who received training.
- Number of graduate medical education, training, certification, and continuing medical education courses provided.
- Number of trained full-time equivalent employees required in each facility of the Department to meet the needs of veterans requiring treatment and care for sexual trauma and post-traumatic stress.
- Recommendations for improvement in the treatment of women veterans with sexual trauma and post-traumatic stress.

Section 203 mandates a pilot program through the Readjustment Counseling Service (Vet Center) of the Veterans Health Administration to evaluate the feasibility and advisability of providing reintegration and readjustment services in group retreat settings to women veterans who are recently separated from service in the Armed Forces after a prolonged deployment. Two million dollars was appropriated for each of fiscal years 2010 and 2011, for a total of four million dollars.
Section 204 mandates appointment of women recently separated from service in the Armed Forces on certain VA Advisory Committees.

Section 205 mandates the implementation of pilot programs, in no fewer than three Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing assistance to qualified veterans to obtain child care so that such veterans can receive health care services.

Section 206 mandates the provision of health care services to a newborn child of a woman veteran who is receiving maternity care furnished by the VA for not more than seven days after the birth of the child if the veteran delivered the child in a facility of the Department or another facility pursuant to a Department contract for services relating to such delivery.

To read the entire bill text, go to http://thomas.loc.gov, select ‘Bill Number’, then enter ‘S 1963’ in the search field, then click ‘Search’.

Of Interest to You

DVA Veterans Health Administration, Office of Mental Health Services (OMHS) improved their website so that more information will be available to veterans and others outside of VA. This is in contrast to sites such as the MST Resource Homepage, which is available on the VA intranet and accessible only to individuals with access to VA and Vet Center computers. The new MST section of the OMHS internet site is now live, so please visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov when you get a chance. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to see the MST section.

One thing to particularly check out when you visit the site is the feature article in the middle of the page; it’s an article describing two veterans’ stories of recovering from experiences of MST. The OMHS hopes the information will reach veterans who haven’t yet spoken up about their experiences or who have been reluctant to seek out care from the VA.

Veterans, family members and service providers can now use the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans to find help and resources. Call 877-4AIDVET ((877) 424-3838) to speak to trained VA staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs recently introduced the redesigned and enhanced National Resource Directory (NRD) website, www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov, an online partnership for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, their families and those who support them. Contact the National Resource Center toll free at (800) 342-9547.
Registration Opens for VA Forum on Women Veterans

VA to Help Build Women Veterans Communities and Networks

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs opened registration on July 8 for a women Veterans forum that will address the quality of VA health care, the provision of benefits for women, and ways for VA to continue improving access to the care and benefits for women Veterans.
http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1921

VA Simplifies Access to Health Care and Benefits for Veterans with PTSD

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced a critical step forward in providing an easier process for Veterans seeking health care and disability compensation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with the publication of a final regulation in the Federal Register.
http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1922

VA Makes Filing Claims Easier and Faster for Veterans

Simpler Forms and New Program Reduce Paperwork and Speed Process

WASHINGTON – As part of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki’s effort to break the back of the backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reducing the paperwork and expediting the process for Veterans seeking compensation for disabilities related to their military service.
http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1912

VA Launches Development of New Online Claims System

Advances Transformation Toward a Paperless VA

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today plans to develop a fully automated, online system for handling Veterans’ disability compensation claims. More than a simple digitization of existing paper-based claims, the new system is part of VA’s modernization of the end-to-end processing workflow. Automation will substantially reduce processing time and increase accuracy while simplifying the way that Veterans interact with the claims process.
http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1919

VA Takes Action to Strengthen Measures to Protect Veterans

Lessons learned from St. Louis VA Medical Center are applied VA-wide

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) primary mission is to serve our nation’s Veterans. President Obama has charged the Department with ensuring the VA medical network is a top-notch health care system.
http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1918

VA Celebrates 66th Anniversary of GI Bill

More Than $3.6 Billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits Issued

WASHINGTON – On the 66th anniversary of signing the GI Bill into law, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has issued more than $3.6 billion in the bill’s newest manifestation, the Post-9/11 GI Bill.
http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1913