



VETERANS ADVOCATE

Homelessness Among Veterans

Special points of interest:

- Homelessness Among Veterans
- Medal of Honor Recipient
- MN Veterans Preference Act
- Minnesota WWII Memorial

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Medal of Honor Recipient	2
History of Veterans' Day	2
Veterans Preference Act	3
Why so Long?	3
Minnesota WWII Memorial	4

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans
 VAMC Building 47
 One Veterans Drive
 Minneapolis, MN 55111
 612/726-726-9375

The existence of homeless veterans is not a new phenomenon. During the 1980's their population rose due to several factors. This period was a time of rising inflation, decreasing wages, and a shortage of affordable housing. Although accurate numbers are impossible to come by, the VA estimates that more than 275,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. One out of every four homeless males who is sleeping in a doorway, alley, or box in our cities and rural communities has put on a uniform and fully honored their oath to defend and protect the United States.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs says homeless veterans are mostly male. More than 90 percent of homeless veterans have had alcohol, drug or mental health problems. America's homeless veterans have served in World War II, Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, or South America. More than 47 percent served during the Vietnam Era. Female homeless veterans represent an estimated 1.6 percent of homeless veterans. They

are more likely than male homeless veterans to be married and to suffer serious psychiatric illness, but less likely to be employed and to suffer from addiction disorders. Other common problems include a lack of education and job training, and limited family support systems. In general, the needs of homeless veterans do not differ from those of other homeless people. However, there is some evidence that programs which recognize veterans' experiences may be more successful in helping homeless veterans transition into stable housing. Since first authorized in 1987 the VA's specialized homeless veterans treatment programs have grown and developed. The VA offers a wide array of special programs and initiatives specifically designed to help homeless veterans live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. Although limited to veterans and their dependents, the VA is the only Federal agency that provides substantial hands-on assistance to homeless persons. VA's major homeless specific programs constitute the

largest integrated network of homeless treatment and assistance services in the country. The programs strive to offer a continuum of services that include aggressive outreach to those veterans living on streets and in shelters who otherwise would not seek assistance; clinical assessment and referral to needed medical treatment for physical and psychiatric disorders, including substance abuse; long-term sheltered transitional assistance, case management, and rehabilitation; employment assistance and linkage with available income supports; and supported permanent housing. The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans provides housing, job training, living skills classes and employment for homeless veterans. There is a bill in congress before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, which is aimed at ending homelessness among veterans within the next decade.

Anoka County Medal of Honor Recipient



James Dennis LaBelle received the medal of honor for his conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving the 27th Marines, 5th Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces during the seizure of Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands on March 8, 1945.

Filling a gap in the front lines during a critical phase of the battle, Pfc. LaBelle had dug into a foxhole with 2 other marines and, grimly aware of the enemy's persistent attempts to blast their way through our lines with hand grenades, applied himself with steady concentration to maintaining a sharply vigilant watch during the hazardous night hours. Suddenly a hostile grenade landed beyond reach in his foxhole. Quickly estimating the situation, he was determined to save the others if possible, shouted a warning, and instantly dived on the deadly missile, absorbing the exploding charge in his own body and thereby protecting his comrades from serious injury. Stouthearted and indomitable, he had unhesitatingly relinquished his own chance of survival so that

his fellow marines might carry on the relentless fight against a fanatic enemy. His dauntless courage, cool decision and valiant spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of certain death reflects the highest credit upon Pfc. LaBelle and upon the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country.

*Each time you see
someone who has
served our country, just
lean over and say
"Thank You."
It's only two little words
that mean so much!*

History of Veterans' Day

Veterans' Day (November 11) in 1918, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh month, the world rejoiced and celebrated. After four years of bitter war, an armistice was signed. The "war to end all wars" was over. November 11 was set aside as Armistice Day in the United States, to remember the sacrifices that men and women made during the war in order to ensure a lasting peace. On Armistice Day, soldiers who survived the war marched in a parade through their home towns. Politicians and veteran officers gave speeches and held ceremonies of thanks

for the peace they had won. Congress voted Armistice Day a legal holiday in 1938, twenty years after the war ended. But Americans realized that the previous war would not be the last one. World War II began the following year, and nations great and small again participated in a bloody struggle. After the Second World War, Armistice Day, continued to be observed on November 11. In 1953 townspeople in Emporia, Kansas called the holiday Veterans' Day in gratitude to the veterans in their town. Soon After, Congress passed a bill introduced by a Kansas congressman renaming the national holiday

to Veterans' Day. Americans still give thanks for peace on Veterans' Day. There are ceremonies and speeches, and at 11:00 on this morning, most Americans observe a moment of silence, remembering those who fought for peace. After the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War, the emphasis on holiday activities has shifted. There are fewer military parades and ceremonies. Veterans gather at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. to place gifts and stand quiet vigil at the names of their friends and relatives who fell in the Vietnam War. Families who have lost sons and daughters in

wars turn their thoughts more toward peace and the avoidance of future wars. Veterans of military service have organized support groups such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. On Veterans' Day and Memorial Day, these groups raise funds for their charitable activities by selling paper poppies made by disabled veterans. This bright red wildflower became a symbol of World War I after a bloody battle in a field of poppies called Flanders Field in Belgium.

Minnesota Veterans' Preference Act

Minnesota's Veterans' Preference Act (Minn. Stat. 197.46 et seq.) was enacted to provide public employment benefits and protections to veterans of military service. The legislature established these statutes recognizing that the "training and experience in the military services and loyalty and sacrifice for the government are qualifications of merit which can not be readily assessed by examination."

The term "veteran" means a citizen or resident alien of the United States who has separated under honorable conditions from any branch of the armed forces of the United States if:


- ★ he or she has either served on active duty for 181 consecutive days,
- ★ has been disabled while serving on active duty,
- ★ has active service as a reservist.

In all cases, the United States Secretary of Defense must certify the active service and the honorable discharge of the veteran.

Special points for consideration during the hiring or promotion process may be invoked by the applicant. Veterans' Preference also provides protection from removal or wrongful termination by a public employer. Veterans' Preference applies to all public employers, including counties, cities, towns, school districts, or other municipalities or political subdivisions of the State of Minnesota, that recruit or employ veterans. The public employer must apply the Veterans' Preference laws during the hiring process. Regardless of the system selected to identify qualified applicants for an interview, preference points must be assigned. The public employer should

have a place on the application for the veteran to request Veterans' Preference. It should also indicate that proof of veteran or disabled veteran status may be required before preference will be granted. This is where an employer may request a copy of the applicants DD-214 form before granting the veterans preference rights to them. Veterans' Preference points are awarded when it is determined the applicant meets the minimum qualifications for the job. This in all likelihood will increase the veterans chance to be interviewed. For non-disabled veterans, who so elect, a credit of five points would be added provided that the veteran obtained a passing rating on the examination without the addition of the credit points. The same would apply to disabled veterans with the exception that ten points would be added instead of

the five. The Veterans' Preference Act does not provide absolute preference for veterans. Whenever a public employer fails to hire a veteran who has received veteran's preference, the employer is required to notify the veteran in writing of the reasons for the rejection. There are restrictions to the Veterans' Preference Act as well. Any veteran who is currently receiving or is eligible to receive a monthly veteran's pension based exclusively on length of military service is not eligible for Veteran's preference credit.



Old soldiers
never die, they
just fade away.

Why Does it Take so Long?

Most veterans with pending VA claims have noticed that rating decisions and other documents are taking longer and longer. Why?

There is no single answer, but many of the VA's current problems can be traced to the Veterans Claims Assistance Act. Statistics indicate that a

large number of cases are being sent back to the regional offices for readjudication based on the enhanced "duty to assist" from the VCAA. While this was a great step forward and long overdue, there is noticeable catch-up in effect at the VA. New people have been hired, but veterans should be prepared for

delays. It takes time to train new people and to readjudicate claims. Plus new claims keep coming in, and the price we pay is with delays. With the change in the law, veterans will now have a much better chance of having their claims service-connected. If you are filing a new claim, submit it as soon as possible. There are some

documents you must file when you open a claim. If you don't have them available, file your claim anyway and then forward these items as soon as possible. Be sure to keep good records. The VA does make mistakes. Finally, be patient! It does take some time to process all the paperwork.


Anoka County Veteran Services Office

Government Center
2100 3rd Avenue, Room 233
Anoka, MN 55303
763/323-5290

Duane Krueger, Director
763/323-5294

Phil O'Donnell, Assistant Director
763/323-5295

Kellie Anderson, Secretary
763/323-5290



*While the storm clouds
gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our
voices in a solemn prayer.*

*God Bless America,
Land that I love
Stand beside her, and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
God bless America,
My home sweet home.*

-Irving Berlin

GOD BLESS AMERICA

Minnesota's World War II Veterans Memorial

Governor Jesse Ventura and the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Jeff Olson continue to encourage donations to the Minnesota World War II Memorial. As veterans, it is important that we lead the fund raising effort to build this very important memorial. The Minnesota World War II Memorial must be built and placed on the Capitol grounds near the already completed Korean and Vietnam Memorials. These memorials each cost approximately \$600,000, and we anticipate the World War II Memorial will have an equal construction cost.

Please make every effort to share this information, make a personal donation, and encourage your friends and family to donate as well.

Please make checks out to the "Minnesota World War II Veterans Memorial."

Mail all donations to:
State of Minnesota
Dept. of Veterans Affairs
206C Veterans Service Bldg.
20 West 12th Street
St. Paul, MN 55155



*Please!
Donations are
Needed!*