



# Florida Veteran

Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.

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## Florida's 22th Annual Vietnam And All Veterans Reunion

Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall, The Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Tribute Panels Walls will be escorted from Brevard Community College Cocoa Campus, Clearlake Road at 10 am. Be there an hour earlier for line up. We are going to need help at the Wall Escort selling T - Shirts, flags, and help with the parking lot control. If you would like to help, please contact Greg at 321-501-6896 or e-mail at [vets2gether@cfl.rr.com](mailto:vets2gether@cfl.rr.com).

BCC has always been a big supporter of the Reunion and they said we could use their parking lot forever if we clean it up when we are done, so please help police it up before you pull out. There will be coffee & donuts available that morning for a donation courtesy of the USA River Rats. More than 1500 motorcycles and vehicles took part in the escort last year and several joined in along the way. The escort route will be South on Clearlake to 520, East to US 1 and South to Parkway Drive in Melbourne, should arrive about 11am at Wickham Park. At the back pavilions the VVB will host a covered dish picnic, grilling hamburgers & hot dogs to feed the many volunteers there to help set up the memorial displays. Please bring a covered dish or snack foods to share. Anyone with large drink containers are asked to please bring them filled with iced tea, lemonade, Kool-aid or even water to share with the many hot & thirsty workers. We will have plenty of cups, plates and napkins. There is so much to do, but with everyone pitching in it is easily accomplished. The sign-up book will be at the Wall Set-up, please remember to volunteer some of your time throughout the week.

Opening Ceremony is Monday evening April 20<sup>th</sup> starting with the Wreath presentations at 6 PM with the guest speakers starting at 7:00pm and will feature the presentation of colors, several speakers who support the Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion, a rifle salute and taps. The memorials will be open to the public 24 hours a day through April 26<sup>th</sup>.

It will be a busy week and we will need lots of help this year to set up the tents, generators and light trees.

**The Tentative schedule of events is listed to the right.**

### FLORIDA'S 22<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL VIETNAM AND ALL VETERANS REUNION

APRIL 2009 Tentative Schedule of Events:

#### Sunday - April 19

10:00 AM ---- Wall Escort from Brevard Community College Cocoa to Wickham Park  
12:00 PM ---- Covered Dish Picnic and Wall Set Up

#### Monday - April 20

6:00 PM ---- Presentation of wreaths  
6:45 PM ---- Florida Air Academy Marching Band  
7:00 PM ---- Opening Ceremony at the Wall – Melbourne Vet Center staff will be available for counseling all week by the wall

#### Thursday – April 23

6:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
7:00 PM ---- Bone Dog  
8:30 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
9:00 PM ---- Mammoth Band

#### Friday – April 24

12:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
1:00 PM ---- Two of Diamonds  
2:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
2:30 PM ---- JQB Band  
4:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
4:30 PM ---- South of Georgia  
6:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
6:30 PM ---- Michael J. Martin  
7:30 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
8:00 PM ---- Open Fire  
9:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
9:30 PM ---- Viva Rock Band

#### Saturday – April 25

10:00 AM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
11:00 AM ---- Opening Ceremonies / Massing of the Colors  
12:00 PM ---- LZ Helicopter Landing  
12:30 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
1:00 PM ---- Two of Diamonds  
2:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
2:30 PM ---- JQB Band  
3:30 PM ---- Patience Mason, at the Wall Pavilion - Recovering From

the War – PTSD

<http://www.patiencepress.com>

4:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
4:30 PM ---- Suncoast Vietnam Vets "The Last Patrol"

5:30 PM ---- Absolute Blue  
6:45 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
7:00 PM ---- Michael J. Martin  
8:30 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
9:30 PM ---- South of Georgia

#### Sunday – April 26

10:00 AM ---- Church Services By Rev John Steer  
11:00 AM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
10:30 AM ---- Patience Mason, at the Wall Pavilion - Recovering From

the War – PTSD

<http://www.patiencepress.com>

11:30 AM ---- Open Fire  
12:30 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
1:00 PM ---- Absolute Blue  
3:00 PM ---- D J Doc Holiday  
4:00 PM ---- Michael J Martin  
6:00 PM ---- Melbourne Municipal Band at the Wall  
7:00 PM ---- Closing Ceremony at the Wall

#### Monday – April 27

9:00 AM ---- Cleanup Wickham Park and Wall Take Down

Brought to you by the Vietnam and All Veterans of

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The recent attempt by the Administrative Branch of the Federal Government to bill the personal health insurance of veterans for VA treatment of service-connected disabilities should be a wake-up call for all veterans. This act demonstrated a radical deviation from the contract the Federal Government has with every man and woman who has served in the armed forces of the United States.

If this had been allowed to become policy, veterans with service-connected disabilities could have lost any health insurance they have for themselves and their families.

The mere attempt by the Administrative Branch to do this to our veterans is an example of the lack of respect they have for our men and women in uniform.

They withdrew the offensive proposal when they were immediately faced with a **unified** confrontation by the veterans' organizations from the entire country. ***This demonstrates why all veterans need to stand together in organizations such as this Coalition, American Legion, DAV, VFW and many others to have our collective voices heard.***

This Administration has shown their hand and we must all be vigilant for further assaults on our brothers and sisters who have served our Country.

"Together Then....Together Again"

**Don Wassmer  
President**

**Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition**

**The Vietnam and all Veterans of Florida State Coalition would like to recognize the following members/organizations for awards that were presented at our Annual Banquet held this past January. VVB Chapter 96 – Organization of the year, Mike Dixon – Veteran of the Year, and Doris Johnson– Member of the Year.**

**In addition, our new executive board members are: Don Wassmer, President, Robert Neitzel 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Leo "Doc" Williams 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Denise Wassmer, Secretary and Jacque Earrusso, Treasurer.**



## VVB NEWS

### **Brevard Stand Down sponsored by The Veteran's Memorial Center**

Stand Down is a belief in the triumph of human spirit over extraordinary odds. It arises out of a conviction that the overwhelming number of homeless veterans on the streets, the beaches, and the fields of Brevard---of America---is unacceptable. Who better to carry forth such conviction than the Viet Nam and All Veterans of Brevard and the Veteran's Memorial Center? The members of the VMC and VVB hope to help a multitude of veterans in need from our area at the fourteenth annual Brevard Stand Down, which will be held at the National Guard Armory in Cocoa on March 21, 2009.

The Stand Down concept was conceived during wartime and is designed specifically for veterans. I actually participated in one while serving as a combat marine in Vietnam. The original idea was to bring the troops back to the rear for a few days of hot food, cold beverages, showers, haircuts, new boots, uniforms, and medical attention. We have adapted the original concept to serve Homeless Veterans. Beyond the services just described, we try to move the veteran past the despair and humiliation of homelessness, inspire hope, re-build self esteem, and afford each veteran the basic respect and dignity every American is entitled to, and also restore the sense of honor earned by those who have borne the battle . . . A very tall order for a one-day event.

Last year's Stand Down linked veterans with a variety of needed services, including health, dental, podiatry, optometry, legal, transportation, Social Security, Veterans benefits, haircuts, showers, clothing, shoes, and more. Scores of counselors, health care providers, fellow veterans, and other volunteers came together with the exclusive purpose of serving the needs of homeless veterans.

There are certain qualities, such as respect, compassion, and empowerment that are essential for a successful Stand Down. By the same token; the event requires careful attention to the more obvious logistical details that allow the Stand Down concept to work its magic.

*Stand Down is a high energy, enormously positive event that strives, above all, to relieve human misery and restore pride and hope within veterans.*

We do not waste time and energy blaming others for the tragedy of homelessness among our veterans; but rather encourage the homeless to assume personal responsibility and restore self-respect as tools of change.

We have learned from the lessons of our previous Stand Downs and the enormous good the event has accomplished have taught

us well. It is my wish that we may continue to meet or exceed the exceptionally high standards set by the previous VVB Stand Down events.

**Our battle cry is: YOU DON'T LEAVE ANYBODY OUTSIDE THE WIRE---IF THERE ARE WOUNDED YOU GO GET THEM; REGARDLESS OF THE COST.**

This event is yet another example of how the VVB gives back to our community and serves our Nation's Veterans.

**In Service to America,  
Bill Vagianos**

## VVB Change of Address

Please note the VVB has a new mailing address:

**Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.**

**1125 W. King Street**

**Cocoa, FL 32922-8505**

The Post Office did away with PO Box 929 and we had to change addresses please do not use the PO Box anymore.

## The Wall Report

Well it has been a busy time since we got home from our last event. We have the Wall in refurb, and we modified the rails in the trailer to make the off-loading easier.

Our 2009 schedule is about done. We just added another event so we will be doing 14 this year one up from last. I also have five groups waiting for me to start 2010 and one in line for 2011. We also have added a few new items to make the Memorial more complete. Hope to see you all at the Reunion in April, and remember check our schedule on our web site [www.TravelingWall.us](http://www.TravelingWall.us) Also if you have any friends that might want to bring in the Please have them contact me for all the info.

See you on the road.

**Greg Welsh**

## More About The VVB Wall

The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall is owned and trademarked by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard. It is the centerpiece of our annual reunion. Our first reunion in 1988 featured a Wall listing 83 Florida veterans still missing from the Vietnam War. It was constructed by inmates at the Brevard Correctional Institution, who at that time, formed a veterans group. Unfortunately the group dispersed not long after it formed when inmates were scattered throughout other institutions to make way for a juvenile detention center.

For subsequent reunions the VVB used Walls from other organizations.

Frequent scheduling problems mandated our own Wall and that came about in 2005 with the establishment of a Wall Committee. This had been anticipated as early as 2002 when our first donation toward the construction of a Wall was made. Greg Welsh enlisted help from his boss at Kennedy Space Center to estimate the

extent of the project and the race was on. A Wall had to be ready by the 2006 Reunion because the VVB could not book one.

Finding a builder was next and several companies were considered. Material samples were made and transported back and forth by VVB members for testing and quality. Greg, Ralph Earrusso and Ray Johnson cut costs by sanding and taping the panels in a requisitioned garage. That's when Greg lost his job at the Space Center and became the Wall Manager.

Met-Con, Inc. of Cocoa constructed the Wall in 2005 donating a considerable portion of their labor. Precision Powder Coating of Melbourne did the finish work with McCotter Ford of Titusville installing the highlighting of the names. Those three businesses stretched the entire length of Brevard making this labor of remembrance truly a countywide project. It wasn't planned; it just worked out that way. A Truck and Trailer acquired by the VVB served as storage and transport.

Sixteen hours before the 2006 reunion the Wall was still being carefully arranged in the trailer. It met its send off time with only hours to spare, but it got there and the reunion went off without a hitch. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall is still being improved as it sets to make its 4<sup>th</sup> appearance at our reunion.

Each year there are more requests for the Wall from organizations throughout the country to display at their events.

"Everywhere we go," says Greg Welsh, "The VVB is thanked for building it and making it available for people to see."

## FLORIDA DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION



**Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting  
Forces**

***"So Others May Live"***

On behalf of The Florida Dustoff Association I would like to take a moment to say "Welcome Home." The Florida Dustoff Association is comprised of Dustoff Medics, Pilots, Corpsmen, Donut Dollies, Med-Evacs and many whom themselves have been "dusted-off" from the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. Please stop by our campsite in Camp Ground B at this year's coming reunion if you

are one of the above to say hello, or are interested in joining our organization. **ALL ARE WELCOMED AT DUSTOFF!!**

This years elected officers are: Robert Neitzel, President, Doc Williams Vice President, Art Smith, Secretary, Roberta Neitzel, Treasurer and Doc Combs, Chaplin.

I would like to take a moment to Congratulate this past years recipients of awards in our organization: Golden Stethoscope (our highest honor) –Doc Williams, Doctor Dustoff Art Smith and Carolyn Zsoldos, Camper of the Year – Tom Burton and a Certificate of Appreciation for Service to Dustoff - Chris Voisey.

We are currently in the process of completing our website – [www.DUSTOFFFL.ORG](http://www.DUSTOFFFL.ORG), so please feel free to take a peek, but please remember, it is currently under construction.

**Robert Neitzel -President Florida Dustoff Association  
1st Vice President VVOF**

***“WHEN I HAVE YOUR WOUNDED”***

## **VVOF needs your Assistance**

The State Coalition has been putting forth an effort to support our troops by contacting corporations and placing public service announcements in local papers requesting donations for our fighting forces. It would be appreciated if our membership would join our effort in helping by collecting items our soldiers can use. We are looking for personal toiletry items such as brushes, combs, soap, flip-flops, trial sizes of shampoo, toothpaste, etc., to send over seas. Items or monetary donations (personal or from organizations) would be greatly appreciated. We do have a 501(c) 3 being used if an organization is donating money. If you and your local organizations are interested, please contact Roberta Neitzel, Treasurer of Florida Dustoff Association at 386-424-1989. ***All your efforts would be greatly appreciated!!***

## **KWA Mid-Florida Chapter 173 News**

**Going** into this year my goal is to make our Chapter one that everyone belonging is proud to be a member. I, along with my officers, have a lot of ideas to make it happen. Our first board meeting will attest to that fact. All of the officers were present except one that got lost. We also had four members present. They all asked to become more involved and I kindly obliged. John Stelling has taken on the “new” position of “Fund Raising Chairman,” along with Dick and Aunita Padgett, who are on the committee also.

Please, if anyone has an idea to help the Chapter bring in some income, please let one of them know and they will if we can make it happen. Jack Miller has accepted the role of “Assistant Sgt-at-Arms.” This should make all rethink their involvement and become active in the Chapter.

We also continue to have Stan working extremely hard at keeping the Chapter Membership current with dues and trying to get past

members from yesteryear back into the fold. Bill Russell (Secretary/Adjutant) is putting together a newsletter that looks a lot like what a newsletter is supposed to be. If anyone has anything they would like to see or be put in the newsletter, let Bill or an officer know and we will get it in.

Remember, our Chapter can only survive if each and every one of us helps out. And all help is greatly appreciated.

**Yours in Comradship  
Chuck Travers**



## **1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Association Florida Chapter**

FLORIDA CHAPTER EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OFFICER  
ORIENTATION MEETING – MARCH 14, 2009

The newly elected officers and Troop Presidents of the Florida Chapter met on Saturday March 14 at Woody and Christine's home in east St. Cloud. The layout of food was greatly appreciated from all who partake to those who prepared and set up everything for us.

The tone of the meeting was set by President John Gailfoil, when he told how and why he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Family. In round table discussions, the input was valuable and some will be put to use in April at the next meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April and again at the Annual Vietnam and ALL Veterans Reunion, April 23 – 26, 2009.

It was mentioned that there is one group of the Armed Forces that is always prominent at the reunions {and elsewhere} and we need to show more “CAV Spirit in our organization and individuals.” We will help you do some of that, but it can only come from the member's heart to express their spirit. We will work on membership a little more than in the past.

To do this, we will have a sign in book at the reunion, and here is where we need your help! When each person signs in, and ALL information is complete they will receive a CAV sticker [decal] for their personal use.

We do have some yellow shirts available and we need to sell what we have and then we can take orders for more. If you let Tom Campbell know at the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting in Titusville, he can have them for you at Melbourne.

The Stetson! For a couple of reasons, we have moved the Kick Off and Drawing to Melbourne. This year, those who are at Melbourne will have the first opportunity to buy your Raffle Tickets. At next year's reunion, 2010, in Melbourne, that is when the Stetson drawing will be held.

Membership is very important. We can only communicate with you if we have all of the required information for mailing you newsletters and other information. Email addresses are also important. We also communicated in that manner. If you have a personal or business card, with all of that information on it plus write your unit, time and location on the back that will work for us.



Upcoming Chapter meetings are as follows:

**“A” Troop** - meets on the first Saturday of each month. Location and times TBD, contact Walt Smith, President @ [tarbucket67@yahoo.com](mailto:tarbucket67@yahoo.com) or Melvin Blackford, Secretary @ [Starchief1960@aol.com](mailto:Starchief1960@aol.com).

**“B” Troop** – for information contact **Bill Franklin, President** [SWFWWF@aol.com](mailto:SWFWWF@aol.com) or Ken Baker at [BakeVet@aol.com](mailto:BakeVet@aol.com)

**“C” Troop** - has changed their meeting dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, except for national reunion dates. We meet at NOON at VFW Post 2093, located at 4444 Edgewater Drive, Orlando FL west of the Fairbanks exit off Interstate 4. Our next event, other than our meetings are Our next event is Monday May 25<sup>th</sup> in Sanford FL for a parade and Memorial Day Service. Remember to pause for a moment of silent prayer at 3 P.M. for those not able to be with us who served and gave their lives in an honorable way.

*“E” Troop, Black Hats* [www.seahog.org](http://www.seahog.org) Meetings are usually held at 1PM on the last Saturday of each month from August-May at Buddy Freddie's Family Restaurant, at the intersection of old US 41 and Bayshore, N. Fort Myers.

The next Florida Chapter 1st Cavalry Division Association meeting is July 18<sup>th</sup> at Frank and Mary Alversons' home at 12468 Boney Road, Jacksonville,(904) 757-7009

## Call To Action!

# Help us Pass H.Res 111

## Co Sponsors are still needed for this Legislation

H.Res 111 continues to gain momentum in the House of Representatives with 88 co-sponsors to date and the indication of more to come. Unfortunately, the support of over 35% of the Congress has not translated to action in the Rules Committee. So, while we continue to work on the Rules Committee, specifically its Chairperson Louise McIntosh-Slaughter, we are also working on another option.

This option requires 218 co-sponsors. We can't do this without your support and continued efforts. If your Congressional Representative is not a co-sponsor, please contact their office and request they sign on to H.Res 111. If you have already called, once, twice or even ten times, please call again. Don't stop calling until they sign on. Have family and friends call and ask them to keep calling. The call is free! All it takes is a few minutes of your time.

**Call the toll free number 1-866-727-4894.** That's the Capitol switchboard. Ask for your congressional representative. Once connected ask for the staff person who handles military matters. If you've tried speaking with the military aide, asking to speak to the Chief of staff or legislative director. Please call or fax, letters mailed require too much screening time.

Request that they sign on by Veterans Day to show their support for the men and women who served and continue to serve this country.

Emphasize that you as their constituent want H.Res 111 calling for a House Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs voted on and passed by the House of Representatives.

Remind them that much new information has surfaced, since the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs concluded 1993, requiring Congressional attention. There has been no action on the follow-up recommendations made by that committee. Additionally, volumes of information has surfaced on the World War II, and Korean and Cold War aspect of the POW/MIA issue, and new information continues to surface on Vietnam era POW/MIAs. This information was unavailable to previous committees.

Please contact your Congressional Representative this week asking they co-sponsor H. Res 111 and don't forget to contact Rules Chairperson Louise McIntosh-Slaughter at

2469 Rayburn Bldg, Washington D.C. 20515

1-866-727-4894

Direct to Office 202-225-3615 Fax 202-225-7822

**Why We Need H. Res 111? For additional information and documents supporting the case see**

[www.nationalalliance.org/legis.documents.pdf](http://www.nationalalliance.org/legis.documents.pdf)

## FEDERAL LEGISLATION EDUCATION PERTAINING TO VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

**These bills are being provided as informational only and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Coalition or its members.**

Note: For additional information on federal legislation and complete wording on each bill, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> and look up the Bill by the appropriate House or Senate Bill Number provided.

**Release date March 13, 2009:** Earlier this week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced his comprehensive bill that would authorize full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation for all disabled retirees.

His bill, **S. 546**, the "Retired Pay Restoration Act," would extend eligibility for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) to service-disabled members who were medically retired with less than 20 years of service and repeal the current restriction that limits CRDP eligibility to those with 50% or higher VA disability ratings.

Sen. Reid declared in a roll-out statement, "It is simply absurd to

deny disabled veterans every dollar they deserve. Being compensated for disability and for years of good service are completely separate, and one must not be held against the other. We must keep the promise we make to every veteran by ensuring they receive all the benefits they earn."

Sen. Reid's legislation would vest service-earned retired pay at 2.5% times years of service times base pay – the same CRDP formula that is now used for medical retirees with over 20 years of service. In essence, it would "vest" disability retirees in whatever years of service they earned.

### S.3023

**Title:** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance compensation and pension, housing, labor and education, and insurance benefits for veterans, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 5/15/2008) Cosponsors (1)

**Related Bills:** S.3299, S.3376

**Latest Major Action:** Became Public Law No: 110-389 10/10/08

**Senate Reports:** 110-449

### H.R. 2910

**Title:** To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for reimbursement to members of the Armed Forces of tuition for programs of education delayed by military service, for deferment of students loans and reduced interest rates for members of the Armed Forces during periods of military service, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** Rep Davis, Susan A. [CA-53] (introduced 6/28/2007) Cosponsors (78)

**Committees:** House Veterans' Affairs

**Latest Major Action:** 6/26/2008 House committee/subcommittee actions. Status: Forwarded by Subcommittee to Full Committee (Amended) by Voice Vote .

## STATE OF FLORIDA

Currently there is a bill in the Florida Senate that would award a High School diploma to honorably discharged Vietnam Veterans who were inducted prior to graduating high school, Although there is not much verbage to the bill and it leaves all the guidelines to the State Board of Education, if you feel this is something you would be interested, or feel that you have input, please contact your local representative.

### SB 316

By Senator Constantine

An act relating to high school diplomas; amending s.1003.43, F.S.; authorizing the Commissioner of Education to award a high school diploma to honorably discharged Vietnam War veterans; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Subsection (14) is added to section 1003.43, Section 1. Florida Statutes, to read: General requirements for high school graduation.— 1003.43

The Commissioner of Education may award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans who were inducted into the United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam Era, as defined in s. 1.01(14), before completing the necessary high school graduation requirements. Upon the recommendation of the commissioner, the State Board of Education may develop criteria and guidelines for awarding such diplomas

This act shall take effect July 1,

## VA hopes to bring vets' care closer

Veterans with traumatic brain injuries struggle to find crucial care close to home.

By Jeremy Cox  
Florida Times Union  
March 2, 2009

No one realized the full measure of Jason Brunson's war wound until, within months of his return home, he became withdrawn, began having crushing headaches and couldn't remember what he did the day before. Though invisible, his injury was very real. And it had a name: traumatic brain injury.

The closest Veterans Affairs facility equipped to treat such patients, though, is at the VA hospital in Gainesville, about 75 back-road miles from his home in St. Augustine. Brunson, a 35-year-old former Army mechanic who served a year in Iraq, said he doesn't feel safe driving alone, so he has his wife bring him to appointments. His trip might soon be halved. Local VA officials want to open a clinic as early as summer in Jacksonville specializing in treating traumatic brain injury, one of the biggest health issues plaguing veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The move is part of a nationwide VA effort to ramp up services dedicated to the condition, better known as TBI, officials say.

"The VA is trying to be proactive rather [than] like after Vietnam when we were reactive, and then had problems 20 years later," said Debbie Ward, administrative officer for the Jacksonville VA Outpatient Clinic, which sits next to Shands Jacksonville.

The national campaign comes after years of criticism about the level of TBI care from a diverse array of critics, including members of Congress, veterans advocates and the VA's own inspector general.

Many cases go undiagnosed because of delays in implementing a comprehensive screening process, some critics say. Partly because of that lack of surveillance, the exact number of brain-impaired veterans remains unknown. Estimates range as high as one in five newly minted veterans - figures typically based on the proportion of service members who suffer face, neck and head injuries.

VA officials are trying to find rental space and hire staff to set up the Jacksonville clinic as soon as possible, spokeswoman Mary Kay Hollingsworth said. The system estimates that from 50 to 75 local veterans head to Gainesville for care.

Convenience is important, Ward said, because many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans were members of the National Guard who never dreamed of uprooting their lives in the first place.

"This is the first war where we've pulled people from their jobs and said, 'Here you go.' When they come back, they just want to go back to work," she said.

Observers frequently call TBI the "signature wound" of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. That's because the enemies' weapon of choice has been improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. What injures the brain isn't the explosion itself, but the high-pressure blast waves they give off, experts say.

On previous battlefields, such head injuries may have proved fatal - as they were among the 12 percent to 14 percent of America's

casualties in Vietnam. But more soldiers are surviving blasts because of better armor such as Kevlar helmets and vests.

But there's a dark side to that success.

"We're building this tidal wave of patients who are vulnerable to significant psychological problems that may not rear their heads for years or longer," said Joseph Tepas, a consultant to the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research and a pediatric and trauma surgeon at Shands Jacksonville.

Brunson's story is typical of many returning veterans who have TBI.

The grandson of a World War II veteran and the son of a Vietnam vet, he fulfilled a childhood dream by joining the Army in January 2001. Four years later, he was shipped overseas to Kuwait. Before he went into action, Brunson, a sergeant, was injured when a 500-pound locking mechanism tumbled off an artillery vehicle and crashed onto his head. He was diagnosed with a concussion and spent three days in a hospital. Not long after, he was driving trucks through the hot, dusty streets of Iraq, dodging makeshift bombs along the way. He remembers three or four - he's not sure how many exactly - coming close enough to blow out his eardrums and bring him to the brink of passing out. "You're checking your body parts. You're checking your team to see if they're still alive," he recalled. Thanks to body armor, no shrapnel ever pierced his body. But his brain was busted up, he would learn later.

Now, the high school graduate can only operate on a third- to sixth-grade level. His headaches are so severe that he wears a device on his back, called a neurostimulator, that uses mild electrical pulses to ease the pain. Like many TBI patients, he also has post-traumatic stress disorder. Brunson has run into trouble with the law, being charged with battery and brandishing a knife in the fall in a fight with his son's employer. He is spending a year on probation and attending VA-sponsored anger-management classes.

Most of his brain damage, he said, is in the front of his brain, the part that controls emotions.

When a reporter relayed the story of Brunson's run-in and other problems to Tepas, he said, "These kids are coming out of the military and they're beginning to have behavioral problems. Would you drive 72 miles to go to the doctor to get your refills? I rest my case."

## Website Helps Veterans in NW FL With Job Search

WJHG-TV - Panama City  
February 25, 2009

Among those looking for jobs right now are many who've put their lives on the line serving this country in the military. But a new website could change that for servicemen and women in northwest Florida and their families.

Rick Marcum started up myfloridamilitary.com about 15 months ago, but recently the site began receiving endorsements from local governments in northwest Florida.

The website allows transitioning military, veterans, and their spouses to search hundreds of job postings throughout the region. It also serves dislocated military members whose bases have closed or been realigned.

"They're the highest trained workers in the market. They're well disciplined. They're adaptable. They just represent the best of what we can do from a production standpoint," said Rick Marcum, creator of myfloridamilitary.com.

158 employers are currently using the website and close to 1,000 job seekers are registered. But Marcum is hoping for more.

"Our business community needs to get on and register their jobs and search the resumes that are listed there. Let's try and hire these people. They've been there for us. Turnabout is fair play," said Marcum.

Myfloridamilitary.com serves all counties in northwest Florida including Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Jackson, Calhoun, Liberty, Bay, Franklin, Gulf, Gadsden, Leon, and Wakulla.

It is sponsored by many of the local workforce boards

**IMPORTANT INFO FOR FLORIDA VETS CURRENTLY USING THE TAMPA AND ORLANDO VA CENTERS: The Orlando VA Medical Center will soon be separate from the Tampa VA and your CORRECT contact information is needed for the Orlando VA Data Base.**

**Check with your team or next appointment to ensure that they have everything correct so that they will have a green light when it is time for Orlando to take over. Please pass on this info to anyone you may know that this may affect.**

**Submitted by an Unknown Author**

I have been at numerous Veterans functions over many years. Sometimes I participate in the conversation and discussions, whereas other times I listen and observe. Based on my

observations, I have determined that there is no **I, WE, OR ME** in the term **US VETERAN**. You may ask yourself, what is meant by that comment? Well, here it is in a nutshell.

When attending these functions, many veterans organizations want to know what is in it for me, what is in it for my organization, how much funding will be designated to our group? The point is, it shouldn't be thought of in this manner, it should be what is in it for **all veterans** – how does this affect **all veterans** and how can we help **all veterans**. The issues that affect all of us should not be brought to the lowest level of I or me, but **ALL OF US**.

I for one do not care how much money my organization can make from the sale of a vanity license plate, but I am interested in how much money goes to all veterans from the sale of a vanity license plate. I believe the monies should be going to transitional programs for our homeless vets, meal programs for our hungry vets as well as other programs designated to aid all veterans, whether they served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom, etc. I also strongly believe that when our legislators are addressing veterans issues, specially when it comes to reducing benefits that all must take heed and not only listen, but pass on the information and make sure the information is disseminated among all veterans groups. We all served together, fought together and we are now all fighting for the rights of veterans – shouldn't this be a united front? The old adage UNITED WE STAND – DIVIDED WE FALL pertains to all of us. If we as organizations cannot unite on issues pertaining to all of us, and cannot determine the best way to fund these issues, then we fail as organizations as our goals in most of our charters and/or by-laws have fallen to the wayside and have been long forgotten. Isn't this the reason we started these organizations and became involved in the first place? So next time the discussion becomes **I, WE or ME**, speak up and ask what about US – the **US VETERAN**.

There are many benefits to join the Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition. A voice of many is heard above a voice of one. The coalition meets quarterly at various locations in the State of Florida and we discuss and disseminate information pertaining to veterans and their benefits. To obtain information regarding joining the coalition either as an Organization, or an individual, please visit our website at [VVOF.ORG](http://VVOF.ORG).

If you, or your organization is already a member of the coalition, and there has been a change in officers, please immediately advise the coalition of these changes, including mailing addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers so we may keep you up-to-date with all pertinent information.

FAIR USE NOTICE: This newsletter contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. The Vietnam and ALL Veterans of Florida, Inc. are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of: POW/MIA, Military, Veterans, Health, democracy, and scientific issues, etc.

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All inquiries, questions or comments may be directed to the President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. All articles printed in our newsletters are strictly the opinion of the submitter and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition or its member organizations. Updated September 17, 2006

**INTERESTED IN JOINING THE COALITION?**



# THE VIETNAM TRAVELING MEMORIAL WALL



## About Our Wall

Our Wall is a 3/5 scale of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, it stands six feet tall at the apex and covers almost 300 feet from end to end. The Memorial Wall is sponsored by The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (VVB). Work to build our Wall was started in April of 2005. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall was completed and first shown to the public April 24, 2006.

This Traveling Memorial stands as a reminder of the great sacrifices made during the Vietnam War. It was made for the purpose of helping heal and rekindle friendships. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall also allows people the opportunity to visit loved ones in their home town, who otherwise may not be able to make the trip to Washington.

The names on The Wall were painstakingly researched from five different data bases and cross-referenced with the Department of Informational and Organizational Reports (DIOR) in Washington, DC, and is the most correct and up-to-date traveling wall in the country.

Feel free to take a look at our website [www.travelingwall.us](http://www.travelingwall.us), read about what we have to offer. Please [contact us](#) with any questions you might have in regards to The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall coming to your town.

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