



Florida Veteran

Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.

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ABOUT US

The Vietnam and ALL Veterans of Florida, Inc., was organized in 1984, under the Name Vietnam Veterans of Florida Inc., It was a Coalition of independent Vietnam Veterans oriented organizations, to address issues affecting Vietnam Veterans and their families both in the State of Florida, and nationally. Since its inception the Coalition has grown to be inclusive, and more open to all Veterans organizations. In 2005 the Membership of the Coalition voted unanimously to change the long established name to reflect that sentiment, and to let others know we would be for All Veterans.

Cognizant of the need to promote awareness of issues and concerns unique to Veterans, the Coalition serves as a single unified voice of our organizations with representation before the Florida State Legislature, the State Veterans Planning Group, the Florida and the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs.

Conceived as a "Grass Roots" organization, the Coalition provides it's member organizations the flexibility of retaining their own autonomous identity both as independent Chapters, and in affiliation with other Veteran organizations, while at the same time being able to benefit from an association dedicated to the concept of strength of numbers and unified action on issues.

Working together through a democratic process, Member Organizations of the Coalition provide mutual support to each other for projects and programs, develop strategies and implement plans of action to address and resolve areas of common concern to all Veterans.

The motto of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc., "Together Then...Together Again", recognizes the special bond of Brotherhood that exists among Veterans and promotes the inherent benefits and positive results that can be achieved as a result of that bond, now and in the future through continued association.

While the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc., is a "Grass Roots" oriented organization which operates on the firm base of democratic principle, emanating from the Member Organizations, the conduct of the day to day business of the Coalition, a tradition of continuity and the requirement for the Coalition to be able to address issues with a common voice in many different forums, necessitates the existence of a "Executive Board" of Officers and Committee Chairpersons. Elected by the Member Organizations of the Coalition, as their spokespersons and representatives, the Officers of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc., handle the day to day conduct of the business of the Coalition, represent the Member Organizations throughout the State of Florida, and at Regional and National levels, and carry out the policies of the Coalition as determined by the Member Organizations, and governed by the By-Laws.

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc., is a Coalition of Organizations, rather than of individuals. Member Organizations select delegates from amongst their Members to attend the quarterly meetings and represent the Organization before the Coalition. The number of delegates from each Member Organization is unlimited, however, each Member Organization receives only 1 vote on the floor.

Business meetings of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc., are currently convened on a quarterly basis (January, April, July, October), at locations throughout the State of Florida. Member Organizations determine the locations, and quarterly meetings are hosted by one or more of the Member Organizations.

Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Good news from the VA for today's veterans. On July 17, 2008 President Bush signed the "Post 9/11 GI Bill", which creates an entirely new veterans' educational benefits program. The new law gives veterans with active duty service on or after September 11, 2001 enhanced educational benefits similar to those provided to veterans following WWII. It also makes it much easier for veterans to transfer unused education benefits to their spouses and children. For more details about the "Post 9/11 GI Bill" and other educational programs, go to www.gibill.va.gov or call 1-888-GI-BILL1 (1-888-442-4551).

The 2008 national election is moving along and Florida is looking like it will be a pivotal state again. The right to vote in a fair election is one of our most precious rights and important responsibilities. Take your time and weigh all the facts before you cast your ballot. If you observe or have knowledge of any improper election activities please notify authorities. Many Americans sacrificed their life to ensure we have the right to hold free elections and it is our duty to maintain the integrity of the process.

Our organization, the State Coalition, will be accepting nominations for election to the following positions: 1st Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. We are also seeking nominations for Member of the Year and Veteran of the Year. The Veteran of the Year and Organization of the Year require a brief bio describing the qualifications of the nominee. Please submit the nominations at the October 10 – 11, 2008 general membership meeting in Edgewater. Installation of officers and presentation of awards will take place January 2009 at the Orlando meeting.

**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 January 2008. USA River Rats – Organization of the year, Robert Neitzel – Veteran of the Year, Roberta Neitzel – Member of the Year. In addition, our executive board members are: Don Wassmer, President, Robert Neitzel 1st Vice President, Leo "Doc" Williams 2nd Vice President, Denise Wassmer, Secretary and Jacque Earrusso, Treasurer.

We also would like to suggest that you visit our website, VVOF.ORG as there are numerous links and a tremendous amount of information available.

VVB NEWS

To those of you who still haven't heard we had a fire at the Bunker on August 16, 2007 around 7PM. The exhaust fan in the men's restroom shorted out and caught fire. The AA Home Group was meeting in the building at the time and saw the smoke and called

911, Cocoa Fire Department responded and put the fire out, but the damage was done and Cocoa pulled our occupational license. The Bunker has been closed since. When we took possession of the building from the County, many years ago, we didn't think to change our insurance coverage, so we only have contents insurance. We had to have a General Contractor give us a price to fix the problems and bring the Bunker up to code... Ready? **\$195,000** The County is assisting us in coming up with solutions to fix the problem, including even a new building. Joe Clark is working out of his house, but is limited in that regards.

The American Legion Post 22 in Cocoa has graciously agreed to let us use their building for our meetings. Thanks Guys. So our of our meetings will be at Post 22 under the Water Tower in Cocoa, just a block north of SR 520.

VVB PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

As it is customary, our summer in Brevard has been long and hot and along with many Floridians, VVB members understandably focus upon helping their loved ones cope with the heat. Beyond the year-round Veteran's Assistance Program (VAP), the Rifle Team, Color Guard and our Traveling Wall, there has not been much VVB activity through the Dog Days of Summer.

Yeah Right!

The VVB VAP continues to meet monthly, operating the finest Homeless Veteran's Transitional Housing Facility I know of...and I know of a few.

The VVB Rifle Team, for those who are unaware, responds 100% of the time to requests. A request will come on at our General Membership meeting and Bob, in his clam "yeah, we can do that" manner simply does it. Bob Bodine is truly one of the VVB's unsung heroes.

Speaking of unsung heroes, Bob also passes on Color Guard organizational requests and the VVB Color Guard is a part of us I am extremely proud of.

And then there is the effort of few that reaches out to multitudes: The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Traveling Wall! Mo and Greg Welsh tote our own testimony to fallen veterans across our great Nation just like the mailman allegedly does...through wind and rain and storm! They need to write a book!

The Annual Reunion is of course, the VVB centerpiece and that committee takes no breaks at all!!

Oh yeah! The VVN and the Brevard Veteran's Council stage an annual stand down for veterans who are homeless. That event makes a significant dent in resolving homelessness amongst our brethren veterans in Brevard.

And finally, the support of the VVB offers to other veteran's organizations toward their causes is astounding!

My point here is that you, the fortunate Son's and Daughter's of this great Nation are an integral part of one Hell of a dynamic Veteran's Organization.

I am not asking you for our involvement, if you are reading this, you are already a member or interested in becoming a member.

Rather, as VVB President, I am issuing an order that you attend our next VVB General Membership meeting.

I write that last statement tongue-in-cheek, but would really like you to participate. We have much to do on behalf of our surviving and lost brothers and sisters.

In Service to America!

**Bill Vagianos, President
Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard**

Florida's 22nd Annual Vietnam And All Veterans Reunion

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard will be holding this years Reunion April 24-26th 2009 at Wickham Park, Parkway Drive, Melbourne, Florida. The Wall escort will be the Sunday prior, which will be the 19th. Our next edition of the Florida Veteran will contact specific information on the event, or check our website VVOF.ORG for the Reunion information.

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.

SSGT RUSS MAREK POKER RUN - Oct 26th 2008

SSGT Russ Marek is a local soldier from Satellite Beach and the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard is one of the sponsors for a Poker Run to help and honor this Iraq Veteran. He was serving with the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division in Iraq when his tank was destroyed by an IED. Three of his crewmembers perished in the explosion and Russ lost his right leg and right arm, his right ear and left thumb and suffered brain injury and severe burns over 20% of his body. That happened on September 16, 2005 as he rode in a tank near Baghdad.

The Poker Run is being held October 26, 2008 starting at Lou's Blues (A1A and Eau Gallie Blvd- across from the Wal-Mart) and featuring Some Gave All, The Moving Tribute on Display. The first bike out is at 9:00 am and the last out by 10:30 am. All bikes will return to Lou's Blues by 3:00 pm. The cost is \$10.00 per hand and you are able to play as many hands as possible. You may also purchase additional cards (limit 2) and the end. There will be prizes for best hand, second place and worst hand. Car clubs and the Public are welcomed to attend this benefit. 100% of the proceeds will benefit SSgt Russ Marek. Donations will also be accepted at Lou's Blues the day of the event. For more info

contact Wendy at 321-288-8389, Darby at 321-987-7025 or Ken at 321-632-4928.

The Wall Report

First I want to say sorry for missing some of the meeting, but it has been a busy year for the Traveling Memorial Wall. This year we have had some great events, with more to come before year's end. Over the 4th of July we had over 13,000 people view the Wall in Thornton Colorado, a suburb of Denver, and in Kokomo, Indiana we had 70 mph winds and held up.

As I write this it is only August 9, but on the 18th I head for the Nebraska State Fair, then back to Ohio, and then Minnesota. But the good news is I'll be in Clearwater Oct 30 -Nov 3, 2008 and VVA 96 has sponsored us in Tallahassee November 6-12, 2008 (VVoF Members) for Veterans Day. So plan on making one or both of these events, and remember if your group or one you know wants The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall please contact me on our web site www.TravelingWall.us. Oh and while you are there check our site out with pictures of past events and our new Hero's page, the story about Lex is very good.

In closing to all of you as groups or individuals that donated to help build the Memorial Wall thank you, with your help we have brought the Wall to thousands of people across the great land. We have allowed Vets to see a brother, Gold Star parents to see a son or daughter, and school children to learn that Freedom is not FREE. Yes all of us have done this because of the Wall we built.

**See you on the road.
Greg**

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE COALITION?

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.

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.



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 upcoming 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 – Robert Neitzel, Art Smith and Carolyn Zsoldos. Certificate of Appreciation for Service to Dustoff - Chris Voisey, and a special award to Tom Burton of the VVSF.

Florida Dustoff is planning on presenting our Wreath at The Navy UDT-SEAL Museum's 23rd Annual Veterans' Day Celebration (Muster), which will take place on November 15 in Fort Pierce, Florida. Additional information regarding this event is as follows:

ANNUAL MUSTER PROMISES TO BE BIGGEST AND BEST YET

Fort Pierce, FL August 20, 2008 – The Navy UDT-SEAL Museum's 23rd Annual Veterans' Day Celebration (Muster), which will take place on November 15, promises to be the best one yet. Rudy Boesch, from the CBS hit series "Survivor: Borneo", is attending as well as best selling author Marcus Luttrell whose book "Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of SEAL Team 10" rose to #1 on the New York Times. Richard Marcinko, founder of the US Navy's elite counter-terrorism unit "SEAL Team 6", and author of the best selling "Rogue Warrior" series, will also be in attendance. The Museum is also proud to host the Navy's SEAL Accelerator, which contains an interactive challenge complete with pull-ups, push-ups, sit-ups, and rope climb.

Keeping in line with tradition, Muster will be kicked off with the annual 5K run/walk along the beach on Saturday morning, November 15. The race, which begins at 7AM (with registration starting at 6AM) features awards for the top finishers. The ceremonies and demonstration will start when the Navy's Parachute Team comprised entirely of special operations Sailors, the "Leapfrogs", will parachute onto the Museum grounds. Following this, there will be a live demonstration by Navy SEALs, featuring a building assault, sniper demonstration, and simulated engagement with close air support.

The Navy UDT-SEAL Museum is the only museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Navy SEALs and their predecessors, including the Underwater Demolition Teams, Naval Combat Demolition Units, Office of Strategic Services Maritime Units, and Amphibious Scouts and Raiders. Located in Fort Pierce, Florida – the birthplace of the Navy Frogman – the Museum promotes public education by providing the opportunity to explore the history of the Navy SEALs in an atmosphere of respect and honor.

For information and a schedule of events go to their website at www.navysealmuseum.com.

**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!!***

Commentary: Farewell to an American hero

By Joseph L. Galloway | McClatchy Newspapers

For the better part of 60 years, two old Army pilots who loved each other argued over many a meal and drink as to which of them was the second best pilot in the world.

The two shared the cockpits of old Beaver prop planes and Huey helicopters; they shared rooms in military hooches all over the world; they shared a love of practical and

impractical jokes and they shared an undying love of flying and soldiers and the Army.

They also shared membership in a very small and revered fraternity of fewer than 105 men who are entitled to wear around their necks the light blue ribbon and gold pointed star that is the Medal of Honor, America's highest decoration for heroism above and beyond the call of duty.

Their story was told in a book my buddy Lt. Gen. Hal Moore and I wrote 15 years ago titled "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young" and in the Mel Gibson movie, "We Were Soldiers," released in the spring of 2002. Too Tall and Old Snake were ably portrayed in the movie.

Their argument over which of them is the Best Pilot in the Whole World sadly came to an end this week when our friend and comrade-in-arms Maj. Ed (Too Tall to Fly) Freeman slipped the surly bonds of earth and headed off to Fiddler's Green, where the souls of departed cavalymen gather by dispensation of God Himself.

Too Tall Ed was 80 years old when he died in a hospital in Boise, Idaho, after long being ill with Parkinson's disease. He turned down a full dress hero's funeral in Arlington National Cemetery in favor of a hometown service and burial in the National Cemetery in Boise, close to the rivers he loved to fish and the mountains he flew through in his second career flying for the U.S. Forest Service.

A few days before the end, his old buddy Lt. Col. Bruce (Ancient Serpent 6) Crandall came to the hospital to say his goodbyes to Too Tall Ed, and to enjoy one last round of arguing with Ed over that question of which of them was the best pilot in the world.

In a fine display of the sort of gallows humor that's always helped men who know the horrors of war keep some of their sanity, Bruce told Ed that he intended to settle the question once and for all by borrowing a helicopter, sling-loading Ed's coffin below it and then lowering it into the grave where Too Tall will rest — something that only the Best Pilot in the World could do. Something that only the best friend in the world could tell a dying man.

These two men received their Medals of Honor long after the deeds that earned them in the furious battles of the Ia Drang Valley in November of 1965 at the dawn of our long, bitter war in Vietnam. President George W. Bush presented Too Tall Ed with his medal in 2001 and hung the medal around Old Snake Crandall's neck in 2007.

When their friends in the 1st Battalion, 7th U.S. Cavalry were surrounded and fighting for their lives near the Cambodian border and needed ammunition and water and helicopters to carry out the gravely wounded, Bruce and Ed flew their Huey helicopters, again and again, into a small clearing swept by North Vietnamese machine gun and rifle fire.

I rode into Landing Zone X-Ray sitting atop a case of hand grenades on one of Bruce Crandall's missions after dark on November 14, 1965, wondering if one of those bullets might turn us all into a puff of greasy smoke. I rode out of X-Ray

after the battle ended on November 16, again on Bruce's helicopter.

In later years, he and Ed and I would joke about the love-hate relationship that I and the infantrymen had with the chopper pilots: Hated them for flying us into Hell and dumping us off; loved them for coming back to get us when it was time to leave.

Mostly we laughed ourselves silly as first Ed, then Bruce recounted tales of one escapade after another; of moonlight requisition raids against the U.S. Air Force for needed or merely desired goodies unavailable from the Army supply chain; of the time Bruce was caught trying to sling-load a 10 kilowatt generator off its pad on an airbase.

Now Too Tall Ed Freeman, a much larger than life-size hero at 6 feet 7 inches tall and a much better friend than we deserved, is gone, and we are left with too large a hole in our hearts and in our dwindling ranks.

Cleared for Takeoff, Ed!

KWA Mid-Florida Chapter 173 News

Commanders Message

This message is not what you may expect but here it goes. With two national political conventions just ending, we should take time and reflect on who we are and where we stand in relation to this great country.

The recent area elections made me sick. Only 15% of eligible voters turned out. What a Shame! I don't care who you vote for, but VOTE. When you think of the brave men and women who laid down their lives to give us the privilege to vote and we don't exercise that right, how can you look yourself in the mirror? Worse than not voting is not registering to vote. Yet there are people who are not registered and complain about the candidates.

My suggestion to them is find another place to live on the planet and get out of my face. I admonish all of you to vote and when are through, think about our lost comrades and say: "Co Mops Sum Me Da" – translation – Thank you.

**Thomas Roberts, Sr.
Chapter 173 KWVA**

The KWVA, by a majority Vote on September 4 by the Chapter Members have selected the American Legion Post 19 as the new meeting for the chapter membership meeting. Beginning September 18, Chapter meetings will be held at Post 19 site, which is located at 2101 Lee Road in Orlando. The meeting, as normal, will begin at 12:15 following lunch that will be available from 11:30 am.

The KWVA Chapter 173 now has challenge coins available. The coins are beautifully minted. One side depicts a scene from the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, with the Chapter number inscribed around the top and the bottom says "Korean is Not Forgotten" and the other side depicts a soldier/marine standing guard against a background of the Korean red and blue logo. It is inscribed "Korean War and Korea Service Veterans" and at the bottom is the date "Since 1950 -". The cost is \$10.00 each - there will be shipping cost added \$2.50 for the first coin and \$5.00 for 2+. If you would like to purchase a challenge coin, send a check payable for the KWVA Chapter 173 and mail to KWVA Chapter 173, ATTN: Robert Johnson, 504 Dew Drop Cove, Casselberry, FL 32707

FLORIDA CHAPTER 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION

Report of Activities June through September 2008

1st Cavalry Division Associations 61st Annual Reunion was very successful in Jacksonville FL, June 18th to 22nd 2008. The Florida Chapter culminated over four years of work to make it happen.

At a time when current economics cause us to diligently watch our expenses, we did have over 850 total attendees at the reunion. From Fort Hood and most recently a division return from the "Successful Surge In Iraq," active duty members played a key role in merging our newest Veterans with the Old. Both seemed to embrace the other.

Over fifty members of the Florida Chapter participated in the reunion from its initial conception to the finish. Woodrow N Hines, Sr. and Frank and Mary Alverson were honored at the banquet on Saturday evening.

PANEL 3 EAST was displayed at 4 events during the reunion: The Vietnam Luncheon, the 7th Cavalry Unit Luncheon, the banquet and finally at the Sunday Morning Memorial Service. Placed in front of the audience, the Panel picked up some lighting that made the surface of white on black appearance very brilliant.

At the meeting of the First Cavalry Division Association's Florida Chapter on August 16, 2008 at VFW Post 4228, Titusville, FL, Certificates of Appreciation from the Association Headquarters were given out to those members in that area who were volunteers during the reunion and in the planning phases.

The next group from the Central Florida and Gulf Coast area will be given out at the meeting in Bartow FL being hosted by "A" Troop. The next **Florida Chapter Meeting** is scheduled for Saturday November 1st, and hosted by "A" Troop. Location of meeting is month at L & J's Diner & Lounge at the corner of Hwy 17 S & Main Street (Business Rte 60) in Bartow at 11 AM.

Our Sympathy goes out to the family of Regina "Jean" Zallen, who passed away on August 29, 2008. Jean was supportive of the la Drang Band of Brothers, and helped in their reunions in Florida. Gerry "Jack" made arrangements for her in the Fort Benning Cemetery.

Call To Action!

Help us Pass H.Res 111

Co Sponsors are needed for this Legislation

280 Co-Sponsors for H.Res 111, But We're Still Stuck In The Rules Committee.

H.Res 111 continues to gain momentum in the House of Representatives with 280 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

OPERATION CLEAR SKIES

Our Family Readiness Group or FRG is sponsoring a program to provide school supplies, clothing, and toys to Iraqi schools in support of U.S. Military humanitarian efforts. Our American service men and women in that devastated, war-torn nation are trying to bridge the gap between our two peoples. Currently, many of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines have programs in which children's school supplies, clothing, and toys are collected from supporters back here in America and then distributed to schools throughout Iraq.

The program we are sponsoring, *Operation Clear Skies*, was designed to help the Iraqi people in the province of Salah Ad Din in north-central Iraq. Demonstrating their support for the Iraqi nation and its children will help our service members develop a rapport with Iraqi political, educational, military, and law enforcement leaders in Salah Ad Din. Such efforts at rebuilding and educating will tremendously assist our service members in bringing peace and stability to this region and to the entire country.

The items that are requested include basic school supplies, pens, pencils, note paper, back packs, etc. Any person or organization that would like to assist in supporting this program is encouraged to mail any of the items listed to the address provided below or e-mail Mrs. Melissa Bianchi directly with questions at melissabianchi@comcast.net. We will also collect items directly and mail them ourselves if necessary. Your support of *Operation Clear Skies* will make it possible for American service members to make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people and their children and to make a positive change in the future of their nation.

M.G. Bianchi
927th CSSB
COB Speicher
APO AE 09393
ATTN: Operation Clear Skies

Giving Back to Veterans

Thursday, Jul. 03, 2008 By [JOE KLEIN](#), Time Magazine

In the spring of 2007, Fred Wilpon, the owner of the New York Mets, accompanied his team on a visit to the wounded troops at Walter Reed Army Hospital. Wilpon was haunted by the experience, especially by a lieutenant who had just arrived at the hospital after being severely wounded in Iraq a week earlier. The doctors said the lieutenant would have bled to death in previous wars, but the efficacy of the battlefield medical care in Iraq and Afghanistan was remarkable. "I'd say it was a miracle that kid was still alive," Wilpon says, but then he realized he was in a hospital full of miracles. As he thought about this afterward, Wilpon figured--as others involved in the care of veterans have--that there was I



going to be an unprecedented need for psychological counseling for the survivors of horrific wounds. "The other thing that struck me was how removed most Americans are from the troops," Wilpon says. "Most people don't think much about the war. When I was a kid during World War II, we were always being asked to do something for the troops. I wanted to reconnect the public with the military."

Wilpon went to work, talking to military leaders about what the returning troops needed most--and to his fellow baseball owners about organizing a massive program to help out. The result, unveiled this July Fourth weekend, is an ambitious effort to raise \$100 million to provide free psychological counseling for returning veterans and jobs for those who need them. The scope of the problem is enormous: upwards of 20% of combat veterans are coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As recently reported in TIME, the military is prescribing antidepressants to troops downrange to help blunt the psychological effects of combat. "There's just a tremendous need for counseling," says Paul Rieckhoff of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "The [Department of Veterans Affairs] psychological-counseling program is overwhelmed. The suicide rates for returning vets are just off the charts. If Major League Baseball can get this program up to scale, we could save thousands of lives."

Psychological counseling is a sensitive subject in the macho world of the military. "There's tremendous stigma attached," says retired general David Grange, president of the McCormick Foundation, which will administer the program for Major League Baseball. "In my day, you'd never ask for psychological help because you'd be disqualified for command." To eliminate the stigma, a few regular Army units have started to make psychological counseling mandatory for soldiers returning from combat. "We decided to do it after those murders at Fort Bragg," said retired general B.B. Bell, who initiated mandatory counseling when he commanded the U.S. Army in Europe. (Bell was referring to the three returning soldiers who murdered their wives in 2002.) There is a similar program at Fort Lewis, Wash. According to Dr. Charles Hoge in the New England Journal of Medicine, such programs can significantly reduce the number of soldiers reluctant to go for counseling.

But those are isolated programs. And the need is even greater in the National Guard and Reserves. Because of the all-volunteer Army, "we've never had so many Guard and Reserves involved in combat," Grange says. These troops tend to be less well trained and yanked out of settled civilian lives and therefore more susceptible to psychological stress. "They also come home totally removed from the base of support that regular troops have. They're all alone," he says. Indeed, a disproportionate number of Guard and Reserve service members have civilian jobs as first responders--police, firefighters, emergency workers--and they can

be removed from their posts, sent to desk jobs or medical leave, if they seek psychological counseling for PTSD. "A lot of these people come home and find that their jobs are no longer there," says Grange, explaining why Major League Baseball included a jobs component in its program. "Ideally, if this thing works, we'll be able to link up a returning veteran with a job and counseling--and prospective employers can be reassured that the veteran isn't going to go postal on them."

With Veterans Affairs overwhelmed by two wars, it may be a good thing, spiritually, for the rest of us to help those who have sacrificed so much in Iraq and Afghanistan. A few years ago, a colonel who had just returned from combat told me, "Over there, it always felt like we're stuck in hell and the country is at the mall." Part of the responsibility for the disconnect lies with President George W. Bush, who never asked us to sacrifice for the war effort. It's time to rectify that. "I'd like to see every kid in America give part of their allowance to help the troops," Wilpon says. As an elderly kid, I'm giving part of mine. If you want to help, please visit welcomebackveterans.org.

ORLANDO VA HOSPITAL GROUNDBREAKING

(Washington, DC) – Tom Feeney (R-Oviedo) today announced a date for the Orlando VA Hospital Groundbreaking Ceremony. Tom Feeney will welcome VA Secretary Peake to Central Florida for the groundbreaking and Tom Feeney will invite veterans, business leaders from the future medical city and local elected officials to participate in this exciting day.

An Orlando VA Hospital has been Tom Feeney's top priority in Congress as he has fought and secured federal funds for this critical hospital to bring the resources to service this ever-growing population to Central Florida.

"I look forward to joining Secretary Peake, Central Florida veterans and local officials this October to celebrate the construction of a long-overdue hospital to serve Central Florida's large veterans population. This new facility will provide veterans with a better quality of life and cut down on the cost to service organizations, said Feeney.

Former Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and current Ranking Member Steve Buyer (R-Ind) said this of Tom Feeney's efforts to bring the hospital to fruition:

"Rep. Feeney's persistent efforts in Congress have helped secure the funding that has spurred the project on thus far. With Rep. Feeney's dedication to completion of this project, the Orlando VA medical center at Lake Nona will soon be a reality," Congressman Buyer.

What: Orlando VA Hospital Groundbreaking

Who: Secretary Peake, Tom Feeney, Central Florida veterans, local elected officials, members of the medical city community

When: October 24, 2008

Where: VA Hospital site at Lake Nona

Time: TBA

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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

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, 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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