



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

Fall 2009



Panayiota Bertzikis, Women Veterans' Network with Specialist Shannon Morgan, Team Lioness at the National Association of State Women Veterans' Coordinators conference.

It has been an eventful time since the last newsletter. Heidi Kruckenberg has left the Network to pursue a career as a doula (A doula provides support to women in childbirth) Heidi will be greatly missed as she created the database, expanded the Network with new members, better communications and timely, relevant events. As Heidi moves onto her new career path, many women will benefit by her compassion and dedication. Meanwhile, the Women Veterans' Network will continue to move forward. I will be working with Cheryl Lussier Poppe who will have oversight of the Network as Interim Director. We will work together with all of you to sustain the great momentum that Heidi started to keep the network vibrant, responsive and continually growing.

On March 27-28th the Female Faces of War Conference was held aboard the USS Massachusetts at Battleship Cove in Fall Rivers. The Women Veterans' Network awarded ten scholarships to women veterans to attend this conference. There was a screening of the documentary *Lioness* and a discussion with the filmmaker Daria Sommers. We also had the opportunity to discuss women veterans' issues with Brigadier General (Ret) Wilma Vaught, Director of the Women's Memorial.

On May 12th we supported the New England Symposium hosted by Northeast Veterans with TBI

Consortium. This event focused on challenges faced by OIF/OEF veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and their families. Representatives from across New England gathered to share approaches used to improve and enhance services to veterans suffering from TBI.

On June 2-5th I attended the National Association of State Women Veterans' Coordinators conference. This training conference brought together the Women Veterans' Coordinators from throughout the country to exchange ideas, information and training to better the services for women veterans in our home state. At the conference they introduced the Disabled Veterans National Foundation, a non-profit that offers financial assistance to at-need veterans.

On June 16th the Department of Veterans' Services hosted a live Webcast. "We Owe You" addressed many issues relative to veterans and their families. Both Heidi and Jenny D'Olympia represented the WVN on a panel. You can still view the webcast at www.weoweu.org.

On June 27th we hosted our very first Massachusetts Conference for Women Veterans. It was quite a success with over 200 women veterans attending from all over the Commonwealth. Because of the success of this conference we plan to have it annually.

There are a lot of great events for women veterans over the upcoming months. On October 24, the Massachusetts Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans is hosting their annual luncheon in Randolph. On November 5th the Network is hosting the fifth annual Women are Veterans Too! event at Nurse's Hall at the State House in Boston.

We are also working to reach out to the most recent group of women veterans from the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. If you have any thoughts on how we can best reach this growing population, send us an email.

If you have questions, concerns or comments on how we can improve the newsletter, your Women Veterans' Network or women veteran services in the Commonwealth send me an email at Panayiota.Bertzikis@state.ma.us or call me at 617-210-5778.

Panayiota Bertzikis, Women Veterans' Network

New Veteran Rehabilitation Project in Gardner-Women Leading the Way!

The greenest project being built in Massachusetts just so happens to be a new rehabilitation program for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and it has an extra bonus – it's being directed by a female Iraq War Veteran who's also a former member of Team Lioness. Often Veterans' programs are depicted as either predominantly male or exclusively male, which can hinder female veterans in accessing the benefits and resources. However, with the opening of the Northeast Veteran Training and Rehabilitation Center (NVTRC), a new program by Veteran Homestead Inc, the face of Veteran rehabilitation and community integration will be changed dramatically through its opening on 16 October 2009. This new center offers twenty 2-bedroom condo units for veterans and their families and is situated on the campus of Mount Wachusett Community College, which is also offering all access to educational opportunities and campus facilities, including daycare, at no cost to the veterans or their family members. Also, the NVTRC will offer individual and family counseling on combat trauma, PTSD, military sexual trauma, adjustment, and reintegration difficulties in addition to physical, occupational, aquatic, and massage therapy. Veteran Homestead Inc. is an undoubtedly proactive organization that aids veterans on every level from basic needs to physical and psychological rehabilitation. More importantly, they have proven their success since 1993. Our veterans deserve the dignity and respect that they have earned.

By Michelle Wilmot,
Northeast Veteran Training and Rehabilitation Center Program Director



Green Jobs for Massachusetts Veterans

The Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) has been awarded a \$500,000 U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) grant to assist veterans in training and employment in green industry professions. The grants are administered by DOL's Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP). Fields of employment include energy efficiency and renewable energy, modern electric-power development and clean vehicles.

The Green TEAM (Training and Employment Access for Massachusetts) Veterans Initiative will utilize prior military experiences while training veterans for licensing, certifications and credentialing to help them become dutifully employed in this growing sector of our state and national economy.

"Providing training that leads to green industry jobs for veterans is a win-win," said DVS Secretary Tom Kelley. "This grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor demonstrates that the Commonwealth continues to be a leader in veterans' services while providing effective stewardship of our resources, which will yield a sustainable, greener future for our citizens."

The VWIP grants will help veterans from targeted groups overcome employment barriers and ease their transition into unsubsidized jobs. Through this program, veterans receive skills assessments; individual job counseling; labor-market information; classroom or on-the-job training; skills upgrading and retraining; and placement assistance and follow-up services. Under this program DVS will network and coordinate efforts with various local, state and federal social service providers, including the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development and local career centers, when appropriate.

For more information visit
www.greenjobs4vets.us

Save a Tree

You can help save paper and postage for the Network. If you would like to receive a PDF version of the newsletter by email rather than U.S. Mail, please e-mail dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us

Women Veterans' Network

First Annual Women Veterans' Conference

On June 27, 2009, the Women Veterans' Network hosted the first annual Massachusetts Conference for Women Veterans. About 240 women veterans, whose service spanned World War II through the present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, had the opportunity to obtain information about the benefits and services available to them as veterans.

There were thirteen workshops that included Massachusetts Chapter 115 benefits, how to get involved with veterans organizations, and how to use yoga to help manage symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In addition, there were exhibitors from various state, federal, and private organizations who were available to answer questions, to inform, and to engage them in matters concerning women veterans and their well being.

Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Murray attended the opening ceremony as the keynote speaker and spoke proudly of the Commonwealth's 27,000 women veterans' and the women currently serving on active duty from Massachusetts.

Later in the day Lt. Governor Murray and his two daughters laid flowers at a WWII woman veter-

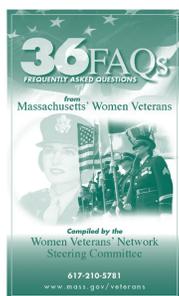


an's grave at the Massachusetts State Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam.

"We would like to do this every year. This is our first time. We wanted to see what the reception was, and it was outstanding!" said Heidi Kruckenberg. "In the future we'll try to locate the conference in other geographic areas of the Commonwealth so that women veterans across the entire state have the opportunity to get involved and experience what we have experienced here today."

By Panayiota Bertzikis, Women Veterans' Network

Our Newest Publication



The Women Veterans' Network Steering Committee has compiled a booklet answering the 36 most frequently asked questions of Massachusetts' women veterans. This publication is an easy-to-use reference tool that points readers to the federal and state programs and resources available to women veterans.

You can download a PDF formatted version of the booklet on www.mass.gov/veterans.

The 36 Frequently Asked Questions books are available at no charge. Please contact the Women Veterans' Network to request a copy (617-210-5778 or Panayiota.Bertzikis@state.ma.us).

Do you know an Outstanding Woman Veteran?

The Women Veterans' Network is seeking nominations for this year's Outstanding Woman Veteran Award. If you know of a woman veteran whose military and/or community service is extraordinary please consider nominating her for this award.

The Outstanding Woman Veteran Award will be presented at the Women are Veterans' Too! event on Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 11:00 a.m.. This event will take place at Nurse's Hall at the State House in Boston. All women veterans and their friends and families are invited to attend this annual event. The deadline for nominations is 5:00 p.m. on October 16, 2009.

More information and nomination forms can be found on our website, www.mass.gov/veterans or by calling Panayiota Bertzikis at 617-210-5778

Massachusetts Women in Uniform

Mildred (Moulton) Cox



On March 27, 1944, I enlisted in the Marine Corps (WR). It was my twentieth birthday and the required age to join. After boot camp at Camp LeJeune, NC, I was assigned to NAS, Cherry Point, NC, as a stenographer in Headquarter Battalion.

My brother was an infantry man at Ft. Jackson, SC and was able to spend time together before he went overseas. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded the Silver Star at Kamp, Germany.

After being mustered out I landed a job as an Administrative Assistant at the Construction, Supply and Real Estate department at the Veterans' Administration. I also attended Boston University on two separate occasions under the GI Bill of Rights and I graduated from Quincy College at age 53. I re-enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1950 in support of the Korean War. I received an honorable discharge by reason of Minor Dependents. **By Mildred (Moulton) Cox**



Margie (Tobi) Anderson

I joined the U.S. Navy (WAVES) in February 1953 and went to boot camp in Bainbridge, Maryland, followed by corps school and a new assignment to the naval station in Norfolk, VA.



In September 1954, after winning a talent contest, the winners went to New York City to Audition for "The Toast of the Town" television show hosted by Ed Sullivan. I was fortunate to be picked for his show by doing a comedy record pantomime of Pearl Bailey's Takes Two to Tango. A total of eighteen acts were chosen to appear on the show on September 19, 1954. The show was a huge success and five weeks later I was called back to perform again on October 24 along with Pearl Bailey. Miss Bailey treated me with kindness and graciously took me out for a late dinner at Lindy's. The show had received hundreds of letters asking if I was really singing or doing record pantomime. Ed's secretary at the time was Jean Bombard and she forwarded all letters to me to answer. With the help of many of my fellow WAVES we answered each and every one. From

then on I was reassigned to special services and did many shows across the country, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and Bermuda. When I retired in 1957 I went into show business in Boston, MA, improving and adding to my act. I still do shows in my area today. My military experience was one that I will never forget and will be always grateful for the opportunity to serve in the U.S. Navy Waves. I had a ball! **By Margie (Tobi) Anderson**



VA News and Updates

Women Veterans Program Managers

In order to ensure improved advocacy for women veterans at the facility level, VA has mandated all VA medical centers appoint a full-time Women Veterans Program Manager. The Women Veterans Program Manager can facilitate your entry into the VA system, can assess and identify your needs, and will coordinate access to services. **Here are the Women Veterans Program Managers for the VA Medical Centers in Massachusetts:**



Kim Adams

Kim Adams is the Women Veterans Program Manager at the Northampton VA Medical Center. After earning a scholarship through the ROTC program at her college, she was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Army. She spent five years on active duty. She has held a number of positions as a Registered Nurse. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Boston College. Kim lives in Longmeadow with her husband, Jeff, a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, and their three children, Kristen, Brian, and Eric. Kim Adams can be reached at 413-584-4040 X2240.



Carolyn Mason Wholley

Carolyn Mason Wholley, LISCW, is the Women Veterans Program Manager at the Boston VA Medical Center. Ms. Mason Wholley received her MSW from Simmons College School of Social Work in 2003. She began her VA career as an intern on the acute psychiatry unit at the Brockton Campus. She later worked in the community residential care program and in urgent care psychiatry triage. In the role of Women Veterans Program Manager, Ms. Mason Wholley's goal is to ensure that all women veterans coming to VA Boston Healthcare System experience timely, equitable, high-quality, comprehensive health care in a sensitive and safe environment. Carolyn Mason Wholley can be reached at 857-364-5994.



Margaret Russell

Margaret Russell, LICSW, graduated from Boston University in 1987 with her MSW. She has worked in outpatient mental health for 24 years. She has specialty training working with PTSD, military populations, women's treatment and art therapy. She has worked for community mental health agencies, US Air Force, US Army, Veteran's Administration and Vet Centers throughout her career. Margaret lived in Colorado Springs, CO, for 14 years and most recently took the position at the Bedford VA as the new full time Women Veterans Program Manager. She loves art, photography, gardening at her home in Maine and living back in the Boston area. Margaret Russell can be reached at 781-687-3283.

Women Veterans' Expo was a success!



(l-r) Panayiota Bertzikis, Women Veterans Network, Cheryl Poppe, Department of Veterans' Services, Holly Marston, SAVE Team, Zina Beverly, SAVE Team

On September 12, 2009, two-hundred women veterans from across New England gathered at the Shaw's Center in Brockton for the first ever Women Veterans' Expo. This event, hosted by VA Boston, recognized the contributions made by the growing population of women veterans, including not only those who have recently returned from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, but also women veterans from other eras as well. Women veterans attended lectures and participate in health promotion activities and disease prevention screenings. In addition, there were representatives from local, state, and federal agencies that provide support in various capacities.

VA News and Updates

Duckworth tells VA directors in Asheville to expect more women, more funding

If anyone knows what it's like to be a wounded veteran, it's Tammy Duckworth, a former Black Hawk helicopter pilot who lost both legs in battle. Now Duckworth is the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental affairs with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and she wants state VA directors meeting at the Crowne Plaza Resort to know that she's fighting for veterans' care. Duckworth addressed about 100 people on September 15th at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs meeting. Local Veterans Affairs hospitals should brace themselves for more female patients and be ready to take advantage of increased federal funding. "Approximately 44 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who are women have enrolled in VA programs" Duckworth said in an interview with the Citizen-Times. "That's an astonishingly high number, so it is one of our key initiatives to expand and improve services for female veterans." Every VA hospital will have a women's health coordinator, as well as coordinators for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The department also is committed to increasing VA funding "by \$25 billion above the baseline" over the coming decade, what Duckworth calls "the largest increase in over 30 years."

She also wanted to assure veterans that whatever happens with health care reform under President Barack Obama, "veterans' health care will not be affected." Another initiative of the Obama administration is to provide care for more homeless veterans, Duckworth said.

Duckworth reports directly to Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, Obama's choice to lead the VA. Duckworth served as the director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs from 2006-08. Before that, she was a major in the Illinois Army National Guard, serving in Iraq as an assistant operations officer and a Black Hawk combat pilot. During a mission north of Baghdad in 2004, her chopper was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade and crashed. She continued trying to co-pilot the craft until blood loss made her pass out. Duckworth, who received the Air Medal and Combat Action Badge for her actions, lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm.

"She knows what our problems are and how to get them solved," said Charlie Smith, director of the N.C. Veterans Affairs office and president of the NASDVA.

SOURCE The Asheville (NC) Citizen-Times (9/16, Boyle)

In order to better the healthcare for all veterans' researchers need the help of veterans to volunteer in research studies. If you meet the requirements, please consider participating in one of the research studies mentioned below.

The Boston VA is recruiting female veterans for a research study examining the influence of mood and personality on learning. This study involves 1 visit to the Jamaica Plain VA. The visit will last 2.5 hours and involves an interview, filling out questionnaires, and completing two short computer tasks. You will be compensated \$30 for your time and you may receive additional money based on your task performance. If interested call (857) 364-4239.

A team from the Manchester VA, Bedford VA and Massachusetts General Hospital are studying ways to more effectively treat the symptoms of PTSD and related psychological problems. If you have experienced a traumatic event related to your service in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), they need your help. Participation will include a diagnostic interview by a clinical psychologist, an assessment in our psychophysiology laboratory, and possible treatment for PTSD. If interested call (603) 624-4366 x6815.

The Boston VA is seeking women veteran participants for a research study examining the problems in one's social life, work, and health related to military service. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your current mental and physical health, social life, and ability to work since your return home. The session takes place at the National Center for PTSD at the VA Boston in Jamaica Plain, MA. You will be compensated \$15/hour for 2 hours (total of \$30). If interested call (857) 364-4517.

Veterans Can Chat Live Through New Online Service on Lifeline

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Lifeline launched an online chat service for veterans in emotional distress. Veterans are encouraged to chat online anonymously with a counselor during the operating hours of 4:00pm-7:30 am EST Daily.

Friends and family members of a veteran in crisis are also welcomed to use Veteran Chat.

Veteran Chat can be found on www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/veterans

Upcoming Events

Horses for Heroes

The Horses for Heroes (H4H) pilot program at Windrush Farm offers therapeutic riding to disabled veterans. The H4H program at Windrush helps veterans with challenges including: head & spinal cord injuries, amputation, auditory & visual impairments and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In addition to therapeutic riding, there are unmounted activities and volunteer opportunities working with the horses that are also available to veterans. For more information on this FREE program go to www.windrushfarm.org/heroes.html

Rowing for Veterans

Community Rowing Inc provides specific programs for adaptive athletes who have physical or intellectual challenges. With the newly opened Harry Parker Boathouse their programs are expanding both in terms of range of participants who can be accommodated as well as breadth of programs. Their newest program is open to returning disabled veterans who are interested in learning to row, or continuing to row. There are opportunities for novice rowers up through those wishing to compete at the highest level (Paralympics).

Introduction to Adaptive Rowing is a free-of-charge program in which rowers work with qualified instructors to learn the basics of adaptive equipment configurations, getting in and out of a rowing shell, and the fundamentals of the rowing stroke appropriate to the athlete's capabilities. Adaptive athletes will row with a typical rower in a double rowing shell, with the goal of rowing independently in a specially configured single. Please contact: adaptive@communityrowing.org or call 617.779.8267 for more information or to register.

Women Veterans Blue Hills Hikes

Join fellow women veterans on a light to moderate hike up Big Blue. Complimentary lunch will be offered by the Boston Vet Center on Friday, October 9 starting at 9:30am. Comfortable hiking shoes and a backpack suggested. It will be a fun time to socialize and relax in a natural setting. Meet at Blue Hills Museum, 22401 Commonwealth Ave in Milton.

RSVP Directions and Sign Up:

Jenny D'Olympia, Boston Vet Center 617 424 0665 or Margaret Russell, LICSW, Bedford VA 781-687-3283

Free Acupuncture Care for Veterans

The Veterans Acupuncture Care provides free stress-relief acupuncture to veterans, active military, reservists, and their families. The treatments occur every Saturday from 10am to 12 noon at St. Andrew's Church, 3 Maple Street in Framingham. Treatments are done in a group setting on a walk-in basis and there is no need to call for an appointment. There are no medical forms to fill out and no personal information is collected. These treatments can be helpful for stress, anxiety, sleep disorders, and general well being. For more information, contact the group coordinator, Christine Lee at (508) 626-0896

Annual Veterans' Day Ceremony

The Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services will host its annual Veterans' Day ceremony at Memorial Hall in the State House on Wednesday, November 11, 2009, 10:00 AM. This event is free and open to the public. Immediately following the ceremony is Boston Veterans' Day Parade. All veterans are encouraged to participate.

Dial-A-Lawyer for Veterans

The Massachusetts Bar Association in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services will be offering free legal advice to veterans on Thursday, October 15, from 5:30-7:30 PM only. If interested call 617-338-0610 on October 15. In addition the Visiting Lawyer Program will take place on Thursday, October 1 from 2:00-5:00 PM at Northeast Outreach Center on 10 Reed Street in Haverhill.

Do you want event updates between Newsletters?

If you would like to receive periodic email updates from the WVN between issues of the newsletter, send us your email address. The WVN sends bi-monthly email updates about events, benefits, and issues of interest.

Email dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us.

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Attn: Women Veterans' Network
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Boston, MA 02111

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You're invited to the 22nd Annual Governor's Advisory Committee Luncheon

The Massachusetts Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans cordially invites all women veterans to attend the annual luncheon on Saturday, October 24, 2009 at 12:00 noon. The Committee encourages women to attend and bring someone with them for the good food, camaraderie, and celebration of women's service in the military.

This year's luncheon will be held at Lombardo's, 6 Billings Street in Randolph. There will be a jewelry sale and raffle. The keynote address will be given by three WWII women veterans and the original founding members of the committee; Lillian Eaton, Ethel LaSalle and Edythe Sheridan.

Tickets are only \$25 and must be purchased in advance by October 10. Call Stephanie Landry (781-925-4486) for more information or send in the reservation form below.

***ANNUAL WOMENS' VETERAN LUNCHEON RESERVATION FORM ***

Name: _____ **Luncheon cost is \$25.00 per person.**

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Guests: _____

I am a woman veteran. I am reserving a table for: _____ (group name)

New England Roasted Turkey Dinner, includes salad, vegetable, roll, dessert and a beverage \$25.00 each

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ **for** _____ **meal(s) at \$25.00 each.**

Make checks payable to: Women Veterans' Committee

Mail this form with your check to:

Stephanie Laundry
290 Newport Road
Hull, MA 02045

DEADLINE OCTOBER 10TH

NO REFUNDS