

# CALIFORNIA VETERANS ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION



# THE ALLIANCE

729 Decatur Street, #1, Bakersfield, CA 93308 661-399-2490 www.cavaf.org

Summer 2010

WE ARE KERN COUNTY'S ONLY VETERANS SPECIFIC HOMELESS PROGRAM

## FROM THE PRESIDENT...CVAF WANTS YOU!



If you have an interest to serve on a nonprofit board and your expertise (personal or professional) could benefit our organization and the veterans we serve – we want you! Last year, the

CVAF/CVAF Board of Directors split so that each company has their own board. Half of the directors went with VAF in Wisconsin and the other half stayed with CVAF.

With that being said, CVAF is looking for a few good men and/or women to volunteer to serve on our board of directors. We could really use people with a financial or legal background, but will consider all interested parties.

CVAF's Board of Directors meets four

times per year (in Bakersfield), usually the month following the end of the quarter which would be January, April, July and October. If you would like to work with an organization committed to working with homeless veterans, please send a resume to 729 Decatur Street, Bakersfield, CA 93308.

**Deborah Johnson**  
CVAF President

## CVAF WELCOMES NEW CASE MANAGER LEE'O WHISENANT



I was born in Wurzburg, Germany where my father was stationed in the late 70s as an Air Defense Artilleryman. My dad manned a nuclear weapon silo. After the completion of my dad's

tour in Germany, we returned to the states. I grew up mostly in Lancaster and Palmdale, CA. I went to Antelope Valley High School and dropped out at the end of 9th grade.

After some time on the wrong side of the law, I got my GED and began attending Bakersfield College in 1997. After one year of college, I joined the U.S. Army as a Chemical Defense soldier. Basic training and AIT (Advanced Individual Training) all took place at Fort McClellan, AB. Following AIT, I was selected for Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Recon School where I learned how to operate the M13 Fox's Mobile Mass Spectrometer Computer system.

My first duty assignment was to 2nd Brigade 3rd Battalion 1st Armored Division, a Field Artillery Brigade as an NBC NCO. I was

later reassigned to 69th Chemical Company in Giessen, Germany with the 1st Cavalry Battalion of the 1st Armored Division. The 69th Chemical Company later moved to Hanau. In 2001, I was deployed to Kosovo as part of the Joint Visitors Bureau where I assisted with the housing and transportation of USO Tour personnel, DoD personnel, and two star and above general officers. During this time I met many congressmen, senators and generals.

My tour was completed in 2002 and at that time, I returned to Bakersfield, CA where I became a Superintendent for Lenox Homes. Since then, I have held positions such as Safety Advisor for Robert Heeley Construc-

tion in Belridge, CA, Residential Project Manager for Ok Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning and Safety Advisor for Valleywide Heating and Cooling in Bakersfield, CA.

I was a resident of the CVAF from August of 2008 until April of 2010. I am truly grateful for the opportunity that the CVAF blessed me with, and I am proud to be part of such an awesome staff.

*Lee'o brings a lot of military and program experience into his position. We are fortunate to have a former resident to excel in the program and now have him as a CVAF team member. Welcome Lee'o!*

## NEW OPERATIONS ASSISTANT – CAROLINE BRANCH



Hi! My name is Caroline Branch and I am one of the Operations Assistant's for CVAF. I was born and raised in Salinas, California and relocated to Bakersfield in 2001.

I have been married to my husband, Scott, for 21 years and we have two sons. My youngest son, Colton, will be starting high school this year. My oldest son, Brandon, chose to join the Marines. He has been in the Marines for a year and a half now. We are very proud of him, and I am very proud to work amongst his peers and be given a chance to

give back to all of you who have served all of us. Thank you ALL for your service. It is an honor to work within an organization whose primary goal is to help Veterans in need; not only meeting their immediate needs, but also helping them gain the skills and confidence needed to transition back out on their own.

*Caroline came on board at CVAF in March of this year. Since joining the team she has proved to be a very valuable member. Caroline is always thinking outside the box to improve upon the operations of the program. Her enthusiasm for veterans, and for her position at CVAF, is an inspiration to us all. She has proven to be a true advocate for the residents of this program. Thank you, Caroline, for your dedication and hard work.*

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The 2010 Kern County Stand Down is scheduled for October 7th at Stramler Park in Bakersfield.

## KERN LIFELINE SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROJECT



**Olga Torres-Munoz**  
Project Supervisor

Substance abuse is one among many challenges that the homeless veteran population faces day to day. In the past, a veteran needing help to deal with this issue in Bakersfield has had limited options. They would either have to relocate to the Los Angeles area for an inpatient treatment program, be placed on a lengthy waiting list or pay for expensive treatment out of pocket. CVAF noticed that veterans who were not willing to relocate would opt for no treatment at all and would succumb

to their addiction. That is until now.

Recently, a veteran was admitted into CVAF who is a patient of the Kern Lifeline Substance Abuse Treatment Project. This project has been in Kern County for several years, and finally has linked up with CVAF to provide a much-needed resource. Kern Lifeline offers comprehensive substance abuse and HIV/AIDS services to patients and their families in one convenient location. Some of the services offered at no cost are:

1. Assessment of Addiction
2. Individual and Conjoint Sessions
3. Group Counseling
4. Family Education Groups

California Veterans Assistance Foundation is proud to work hand in hand with Kern Lifeline Substance Abuse Treatment Project as an outreach partner to better provide treatment for substance abuse issues for our Military Veterans.

## KEITH WILSON JOINS THE CVAF BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Keith is a disabled Army veteran and former employee when CVAF first came to Bakersfield in the fall of 1999. He was hired to work in the Resource and Referral Center co-located with the Kern County Veterans Service Department where he previously worked as a work study/AmeriCorps volunteer prior to being employed by CVAF as a Case Manager.

Keith moved to Virginia in April 2006 with his wife, who was transferred with her position working for Homeland Security. He has been married to his lovely bride, Molly, for 12 years and has three children and six grandchildren. His hobbies include reading about military history and sightseeing.

Keith is currently employed with the Department of the Army as a Management and Programs Analyst. He researches Agent Orange and PTSD stressors for the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, veterans, congressmen or anyone who is trying to get information from the Army, Navy and Air Force. His focus on research is for the Korean War, Vietnam, Peacetime and Desert Storm.

*Welcome aboard, Keith! We know you will be a great asset to the CVAF board.*

## From the Trenches

### THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING



Here at CVAF we encourage our residents to become more involved in volunteering and giving back to the community. The following are just a few samples of what our residents are doing.

Habitat for Humanity – Golden Empire is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry seeking to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness around the world. Habitat homes are built using volunteer labor, donated funds and materials. Volunteer Coordinator, Pat Rhoades for Habitat, believes volunteers are the heart and soul of their organization and seeks volunteers every week to assist their staff to do great things in the community. CVAF Veteran Robert T. answered to the call of duty when Pat called and requested a group of volunteers. Robert T. was able to recruit several other CVAF resident Veterans to donate their time to assist Habitat in constructing a wooden fence, assemble furniture and do general clean up.

### KEEPING KERN COUNTY COOL

CVAF Veterans participated again in this year's annual fan drive. Benefits go to

seniors, the disabled and low-income families who otherwise could not afford fans. CVAF veterans willingly and graciously stood out in Bakersfield's blazing heat for two weeks to assemble and distribute fans to seniors and less fortunate individuals in the community.



**Pictured: Robert T.**

### KEEP KERN ROADS CLEAN PROJECT

The Keep Kern Roads Clean Project helps to keep our county roads cleaner. To participate, individuals, families, organizations and businesses contact the county to get assigned a section of the road system. They, in turn, put up a sign with their name on it. This project is our way to fight back and take back the place we call home. CVAF cleans up a two-mile stretch of highway from the corner of Roberts Lane and Manor to the corner of Manor and North Chester up to three times a year.



**Pictured: Mark E., Rick H. and Tim T.**

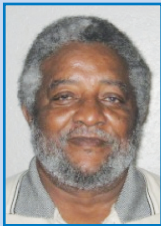
### Arrrrrr! Matey!



The Society for Disabled Children is a nonprofit organization that has been providing services to Kern County since 1947. In order to continue to provide programs to the community, it is essential that the society hold regular fundraising events. Recently, they held a Pirate Treasure Hunt; a fun-filled day with games, dining, dancing and a silent auction. During the planning phases, it came to the attention of event coordinators that they were going to need manpower.

Sarita Esqueda, CVAF Operations Assistant was contacted and asked if any veterans would be able to help out. Sarita put the word out and within days CVAF had a list of resident volunteers ready to lend a helping hand. The Pirate Treasure Hunt was held at California State University-Bakersfield and CVAF residents showed up in groups of four throughout the day. The residents were able to assist with the set up before the Treasure Hunt began, traffic control throughout the day and also helped with the break down and clean up when things wrapped up. Beth Carstens was so appreciative of all the volunteers' hard work, she noted, "Thank you to all of the veterans who helped out that day. We look forward to partnering with CVAF in the future."

## HIGHLIGHT A VETERAN



My name is Earlie C. Deloney, Jr., but to my family I'm known as "Sonny". I grew up in this country, the United States of America. I was born in Oklahoma and my family migrated to Bakersfield

for a better life. We settled in picking cotton, cutting grapes, picking up spuds (potatoes) and chopping cotton.

As soon as I became 17 years of age, I joined the United States Marines. I was proud of my uniform and was very gung ho! I had my sights set on a career in the Corp. I was set on the position of Gunnery Sgt. I thought the Gunny rated next to Sgt Major. After I was honorably discharged from the service, I started raising my family, going from city to city. I was caught up in the rat race of being an addict of drugs and alcohol.

For the next forty (40) years, I roamed this country in a fog that was a nightmare. Then finally, I went to the Haven in Los Angeles, got cleaned up, drove all over the United States in a truck and came back to Bakersfield, a homeless veteran. I ran into the people at CVAF and my whole life changed for the better. I was able to settle down and set some goals without worrying about a place to stay or food to eat. I managed to get some classes at UCSB, to get my tax license and became a Notary Public.

Thanks Debbie, Heather, Tunisha, Caroline, Sarita, Joe, Thomas and Lee'o.

## CANNOT BE QUEASY



Serving Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties

Not many job opportunities come with the requirement, "cannot be queasy." Valorie Dixon, a Veteran Representative at the Employment Development Department needed 25 people who could meet this requirement. She contacted Heather Kimmel, CVAF Operations Director, and asked her to create a list of those who would be interested in an unusual long-term temporary position. Intrigued, Heather asked for more details.

The position was an ice cream taste tester at Dreyer's Ice Cream Plant, contracted through VOLT Workforce Solutions. CVAF Case Manager, Tunisha Crite, presented the opportunity to the residents at the town hall meeting that evening. By the next morning, Heather was able to give Valorie a list of 15 veterans who were interested in the position. Valorie forwarded the information to VOLT workforce solutions, a local placement agency

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# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## "PAYING IT FORWARD"

It truly is amazing how one good deed can lead to another. Every year at Thanksgiving and Christmas, CVAF residents donate many man-hours to put food baskets together through St. Phillips and St. Vincent De Paul Church. These food baskets in turn are given to the elderly and needy people in Kern County.

One of the members of St. Phillips remembered us, and was contacted by the 923rd Transportation Company Detachment here in Bakersfield. The first organization they thought about was CVAF. St. Phillips called and asked,



Pictured is SGT Booker Jennings and SPC Armando Ochoa.

"Could you use 30 brand-new, twin-sized mattresses? If you can, contact Armando Ochoa with the 923rd and he will help you out."

We called immediately, and the mattresses were loaded up on a new 5-ton vehicle and they coordinated a driver to take them and drop them off. Talk about service!

CVAF is grateful to St. Phillips and to the 923rd for helping our program. CVAF

will use these mattresses to replace our worn ones, and will use the gently used ones to pay it forward to another agency or program in Bakersfield.

## ICE CREAM, YOU SCREAM!

The instructions read "before you go to pick up the ice cream, you must contact Dwayne" and so heading north on Highway 99, Case Manager Lee'o Whisenant frantically continued to hit the redial button on his cell phone. The plush seats of the CVAF's new Chrysler 300 cushioned the ride to the Dreyer's Ice Cream manufacturing facility on District Boulevard, where according to the directions you need to turn here, park there and pick up what sounded like a huge amount of ice cream.

No answer from Dwayne and so Lee'o called his inside connection at the ice cream hub of Kern County, Laura Flores. Laura has worked for Dreyer's for over 10 years, and was the CVAF's initial contact with the global corporation. Laura said she'd meet Lee'o at the gate and sure enough, when the Big Blue 300 pulled into the back lot, there stood Laura, amidst a row of trailers and truckers. She was all decked out like the women you see in the old World War II posters: blue-collared from head to toe with her trucker hat and hair net underlay.

Pleasantries complete, they headed in for servicing Kern County for the past 30 years.

On Monday, June 21st, Penny Lewis (a representative from VOLT) came to CVAF and conducted interviews. The residents had to pass a comprehension test, an oral interview and a background check to be offered employment. Three of CVAF's residents are now professional ice cream taste testers, and one resident was offered full time employment with a different company as a result of the day's interviews. Thank you, Valorie, for helping get our veterans back to work.

the prize – 136 freshly-packed, tiny delicacies known as ice cream sandwiches. Dreyer's was nice enough to give the CVAF a donation for the 4th of July picnic to be held at the CVAF Decatur facility on July 2nd.

Entering the facility, Lee'o quickly realized one thing: this was definitely the coldest place in all of Bakersfield. Row upon row of deliciously chilled, single-serving ice cream sandwiches neatly packed together on display, the likes of which must be seen to comprehend. THANK YOU, DREYER'S!

## BAKERSFIELD VET CENTER'S NEW LOCATION TO OPEN IN FALL 2010

Bakersfield is one of 39 cities nationwide chosen to open a new Vet Center. The Vet Center program was established by Congress in 1979, out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam-era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems.

In April 1991, in response to the Persian Gulf War, Congress extended the eligibility of veterans who survived during other periods of armed hostilities after the Vietnam War. Those other periods are identified as Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia and Kosovo/Bosnia. In October 1996, Congress extended the eligibility to WWII and Korean Combat Veterans and services are now available for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and operations within the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). By the

— VET CENTER, continued on page 4

## CVAF 2010 WISH LIST

### Personal Care Items:

Toothbrushes & Holders  
Dental Floss  
Foot Powder  
Shampoo  
Conditioner  
Disposable Shavers  
Shaving Cream  
Bar Soap  
Bar Soap Holders/Containers  
Lotion  
Liquid Hand Soap  
Fingernail/Toenail Clippers  
Deodorant  
Baby Oil  
Vaseline  
Denture Bath, Cleaner & Adhesive  
Toilet Paper  
Tissues

### Clothing:

*Good used clothing is fine.*

House Slippers, new (Sizes 8-13)  
Shirts & T-shirts (S, M, L, XL, 2XL)  
Underwear, new (S, M, L, XL, 2XL)  
Socks – Athletic, new (Sizes 8-13)  
Men's jeans (Waist sizes 32 to 42)  
Shower shoes/flip flops, new (M, L, XL)  
Tennis Shoes, new (Sizes 8-13)  
Winter Coats/Jackets  
Eyeglasses, gently used or new

### Laundry Items:

Fabric Softener Sheets  
Laundry bags (mesh type)  
Sewing Kits  
Laundry Detergent  
Hangers, plastic

### Household Supplies (new or gently used):

Coffee Mugs  
Coffee Pots  
Bakeware  
Silverware  
Pots & Pans  
Pillows (standard)  
Blankets, twin  
Comforters, twin  
Sheet Sets, twin  
Rugs (entrance/bath)  
Bath Towels/Washcloths  
Toasters & Irons  
Kitchen Utensils

### Recreational Items:

Movies, DVD/VHS  
26" Tire Tubes and Repair Kits  
Bicycles  
Bike Rack  
Puzzle books  
Greeting Cards  
Pens, pencils  
Envelopes  
Stamps  
Stationery  
Books  
Patio (outside) Ceiling Fan

### Food Items

*(cases only, please):*

Coffee  
Canned Meat/Fish/Poultry  
Kool-Aid/Iced Tea Mix  
Canned Chili/Stew/Pasta  
Canned Veggies/Fruits  
Canned/Bottled Fruit Juices  
Fresh Produce

*While donations of any kind are always welcome, please call the Center at 661-399-2490 before making any donations of the above listed items. Cash donations are always needed and welcomed. As always, the residents and staff thank you for your kind thoughts and generous support.*

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Providing services takes money; foundations and corporations fight hard for a share of big federal and state grants. The California Veterans Assistance Foundation relies on the generosity of people like you to help end the national disgrace of homeless veterans who are (MIA) missing in America.

Please send your tax-deductible donations to:

**California Veterans Assistance  
Foundation, Inc.**  
729 Decatur Street, # 1  
Bakersfield, CA 93308

Please help us to continue our efforts to help those veterans who need a "Hand-up and not a hand-out."

## CVAF MISSION STATEMENT

*Our mission is to help veterans or at risk of becoming homeless veterans, regain, maintain, and improve their status in society by providing an alcohol and drug-free, secure environment through which a wide array of human services can be accessed in an atmosphere of dignity and mutual concern.*

**VET CENTER, continued from page 3—**

end of 2010, there will be 300 Vet Centers across the U.S. and surrounding territories (U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam and American Samoa).

The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them successfully transition from military to civilian life. The family members of all veterans listed are eligible for Vet Center services, as well. Combat Veterans have earned these benefits and there is no cost to them or their family members. The majority of the Vet Center staff is veterans, with more than 50% having served in combat, and over one third are combat Veterans who served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

The current Bakersfield Vet Center is located with the Veterans Service Department at 1120 Golden State Avenue. The VA has purchased the property next door, and plans to have the new facility operational by November of this year according to Vernon Valenzuela, a Vietnam Veteran who has been selected to be the team leader.

To learn more about the Bakersfield Vet Center, call 661-868-7313. For information on a Vet Center near you, go to [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov) or call 866-496-8838.

## 4TH OF JULY PICNIC AT CVAF



On a gloriously sunshine filled Friday afternoon at the CVAF Decatur facility staff and residents came together to celebrate the Independence of our great nation. Case Managers Joe Sanchez and Lee'o Whisenant took turns flipping burgers and rolling hot dogs on the smoky grill (man work). While the lovely ladies of CVAF, President Deb Johnson, Operations Director Heather Kimmel, Case Manager Tunisha Crite, an Operations Assistant Caroline Branch and Sarita Esqueda prepared fresh vegetables, iced down the drinks, and



dished up beans and potato salad.

The afternoon was a perfectly uneventful event with flip-flop chat on the patio amongst resident and staff. Case Manager Lee'o Whisenant and Joe Sanchez played horseshoes with the residents while everyone ate burgers and hot dogs. Dreyers Ice Cream donated a fair supply of ice cream sandwiches to top off the afternoon and when the clean-up was done everyone appreciated the glory of being an American, veteran and civilian alike.