



UPDATES

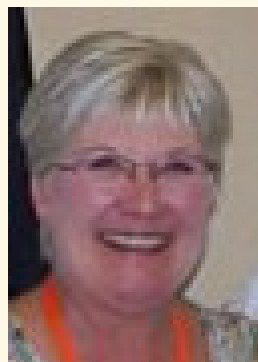
Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America

Enewsletter
February 2012
Volume 7
Issue 1

Together Always

President's Message

I have been so touched by all the assistance received over this past year from our board of directors. Many have taken on extra roles due to major crises of a few of the board's members. Pat Furno is now home and recovering from major surgeries to her heart and stomach, and still has problems with her peripheral sight. I thank those of you who have helped her financially. She is very proud of how many members of AVVA, have sent her cards and emails to help brighten her day. Suzanne Blohm-Weber has had a tough year also. Being responsible for caring for her elderly parents and the death of her father and she too is recovering from surgery and our thoughts and prayers are with her, also.



We all need to take care of ourselves. We all give so much to our organization and sometimes do not take a look at ourselves. We take things from our basket but fail to replenish it. So please, get that health check-up and take that needed rest as necessary.

Looking back this year the national board has accomplished many goals. We have brought back the Paper Safe. This is now in the printing stage and will soon be available in print and via the AVVA the Web site. We're also releasing a brochure that discusses benefits for widows or widowers. Many of our members and the general population do not know that they may be entitled to benefits from the VA. This brochure goes in depth to what the benefits are. This will also be posted on our web site for chapters to print out and have available for their chapter or membership tent. If you are the spouse of a deceased Veteran, see an accredited service officer.

Our communication continues to improve with our new web site, giving our members and the public better access to information of who we are and what a great organization we have become. We also have the AVVA Facebook page, the 'Updates' newsletter and our Newsflashes. Your input is important to this National Board of Directors. We are listening to our membership, and all of your ideas are treated with respect. I think you will agree, that we have listened to your ideas or concerns on every issue. We continue to encourage you to contact your regional directors or executive officers. Everyone's enthusiasm has grown in support of our organization and the overwhelming attendance at our Leadership Conference this past August made this evident.

The membership committee is doing a superior job, easing the process for anyone to form a chapter. A new membership brochure has been made available containing an application and contact information, a great presentation on a display table for a membership drive. Our structure is growing, and I am very pleased of the accomplishments of the new incorporated chapters.

The Election committee started a data base of AVVA State and Chapter Presidents or Representatives. I thank the committee and the State Representatives and Presidents for their time consuming effort.

As we continue to work to earn the respect of Vietnam Veterans of America, there is a better perception of our organization with VVA and other Veteran's service organizations. Communicating and working with them is always very rewarding. We are assisting VVA chapters in holding Agent Orange Town Hall meetings and making members aware of the Faces of Agent Orange. More families are needed to share their stories. The more Faces of Agent Orange we have, the better prepared we are to address this issue with our legislators and insist that they help the children affected by Agent Orange. Our health committee is doing an outstanding job with the new Health newsletter, making information available to anyone with a child affected from Agent Orange or a Veteran with Agent Orange related health problems. Their conditions affect one and all.

The Strategic Planning Committee has taken new heights. We now have a core values statement added to our Policy and Procedures Manual. The committee has worked hard to include our member's thoughts on how to proceed to make AVVA a premier Veterans Service Organization. I am proud of all the hard work they have put into this process.

In closing, I sincerely wish you all a Healthy and Happy New Year and thank each and every one of you for helping our Veterans, returning military and their families. We have much to accomplish this coming year. The National Board of Directors will be steadfast in moving AVVA forward, and will continue to hold our members with respect and love.

UPDATES DEADLINES

Next deadline: Feb. 15, 2012

Submitted article(s) will be published in the next issue. All submissions will be considered, screened for content and edited if necessary. All article(s) must be appropriate for this newsletter. Proofread article(s) before submitting. Send photo(s) with chapter reports; we want to see what you are doing. Send submissions and e-mail changes or requests temporarily to: nswitzer@avva.org

"Letters to the Editor" are strictly the opinions of the author and not that of Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. All Chapter, State and Regional reports are the responsibility of the writer and must contain name and contact information in order to be published. Content sources must be verifiable and accurate. Make all letters appropriate

Thank you for support.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

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Join the AVVA Talklist!

Send an email to:
Southern@lodellink.com
And request to be put on the talklist

AVVA Merchandise,
contact: Penny Meinhardt
pmeinhardt@avva.org

Correction to the November Updates newsletter: Sherry Lynn Wright from Kansas received the Fellowship Award.

Presidential Salute to an Honorary Soldier

“Broadway” Joe Namath may be the most well-known man to go through Beaver County, Pa. and meet with the President of the United States at the White House. But on January 12, the most endearing person to make that same trip just may be 23-year-old Jeremy Carr.

Carr will be the guest of President Barack Obama in what has to be the moment of a lifetime. Carr, who has Down syndrome, has dedicated himself to helping soldiers and his mother, Teresa, with Vietnam Veterans of America events of all kinds. This past spring, he helped members of the VVA Chapter 862 organization with a roadside clean-up project along Route 65 in Beaver County. When the work was done, and several times during the clean-up, he had a simple question, “Mom, will President Barack Obama be proud of me for helping the soldiers?”

After much deliberation, Teresa Carr finally posed her son’s oft-repeated question directly to the President in a letter sent in September. After all, she worried, would the President have time to respond to one person’s inquiry given the demands of the job?

Jeremy and Teresa Carr got their answer during President Obama’s Veterans Day Speech on Nov. 12, delivered from Arlington National Cemetery. In it he said, “Well, Jeremy, I want you to know that, yes, I am proud of you. I could not be prouder of you, and your country is proud of you. Thank you for serving our veterans and helping them continue their service



“...one young man’s example is one that we must all now follow.”

Photo by Larry Shields from the Salem News in Salem, OH

to America. And Jeremy’s example – one young man’s example – is one that we must all now follow.”

Local television, newspaper and other media outlets in the Pittsburgh market picked up on the story and soon after national exposure came as well. ABC News’ “20/20” program sent a crew to the Carr home in early December and shot a feature story that aired on its Dec. 23 national telecast with Barbara Walters.

The family has been invited to attend the VVA Board of Directors meeting in Silver Spring, Md. later this month, and subsequently invited to meet first-hand with President Obama. Bringing Jeremy to Washington for the trip has been a joint effort between the VVA and the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. The AVVA will be covering the expenses while the family is in Washington, while local VVA Chapter 862 from Beaver County will be providing an escort and transportation.

Teresa missed hearing the President’s Veterans Day remarks live because she was organizing and participating in a local parade in Beaver. She learned of the speech through a text message sent by her sister. Jeremy heard the President’s words while watching live at his group home in Ohio along with a few of his friends and roommates.

This time, when the President speaks about Jeremy Carr, a proud mother will be by his side to hear it first-hand.

In Memory Day

A day set aside to honor those who died as a result of the Vietnam War The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund’s In Memory program honors those who died as a result of the Vietnam War, but whose deaths do not fit the Department of Defense criteria for inclusion upon the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Every year there is a ceremony to pay tribute to these men and women who sacrificed so much for their country. The ceremony is held on Flag Day in June — In Memory Day.

During the In Memory Day ceremony, the names of all the honorees are read aloud. At the conclusion of the ceremony, certificates bearing the honorees’ names are placed at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The tributes are collected by the National Park Service and stored in a permanent archive. In addition, the honorees

Cathy Kiester and Sharon Hobbs place a wreath at the In Memory Plaque on behalf of AVVA



are included in the Virtual In Memory Honor Roll to serve as a lasting reminder of their service and sacrifices.

If you know of anyone whose death was related to Vietnam War involvement, please complete an In Memory application and return it to VVMF along with a copy of the death certificate, proof of service in Vietnam*, a clean photograph of the honoree and a short biography. To have a loved one considered for the In Memory program in 2012, you must submit your application to VVMF by April 12th, 2012. Instructions for what to include and where to send the completed application are outlined on the application form. Please do not send applications for 2012 before September 2011.

For more information visit the website at vvmf@vvmf.org.

PLEASE NOTE: The In Memory Day has changed this year...it was always in April, cold, wet and windy. They have changed it to flag day...please get this to your membership so that those families who may want to honor their loved ones can plan and sign up to attend. Flag Day in 2012 is on Thursday, the **14th of June**. In the United States, Flag Day is always celebrated on the 14th of June.



VVA Chapter 862 hosts VVA's 14th Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting

by *Faces of Agent Orange*

Saturday, November 5, 2011



On November 5, VVA Chapter 862 hosted VVA's 14th Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting at the Penn State Beaver campus, near Pittsburgh. Kudos to the members of VVA/AVVA Chapter 862, to organizers Bobby and Phil Morris, and to all who worked so hard to make this event a success!

VVA National VP Fred Elliott; PASC President Larry Holman; AVVA President Nancy Switzer; and PA AVVA President Nancy Rekowski were joined by over one hundred veterans and family members—many of them new to VVA. They came from Pennsylvania, from West Virginia, and from Ohio to listen to the panelists and to share their own Agent Orange stories. PASC Treasurer David Johnston traveled the distance from Harrisburg to be there. Panelists included Bobbie Morris; AVVA National President Nancy Switzer; Peter and Sue Petrosky; Heather Bowser; George Claxton, and VVA BOD Member Sandie Wilson. Larry Googins, 2nd VP of PASC and VVA 862 Treasurer, was the master of ceremonies; Chapter 862 VP Pete Petrosky led the presentation of the colors; and F. Lee Corfield, PASC Secretary and VVA 862 Secretary (also in the Color Guard) led the singing of the National Anthem.

Jacki Ochs, filmmaker/director of the soon-to-be re-released, award-winning documentary, Vietnam: The Secret Agent, has recently posted to YouTube the below short, which she filmed at the town hall held at the VVA Region 2 Meeting in Atlantic City—VVA 862's Petroskys, as well as the Morrises, are featured in this piece—and the PSA directs viewers to the VVA Agent Orange Committee page at www.vva.org!



From Bobbi Morris, President, AVVA Chapter 862, Inc.
I would like to share feedback from the A&O town hall meeting.

"Congratulation! on a sensational program. It was well organized and the speakers were quite effective. I have to tell you that I know so many people that should attend a presentation like this."
Tonda, Highland, OH

"Thank you for having the Town Hall meeting. Mel and I enjoyed it very much and learned so much that day. I hope that a Town Hall meeting could be arranged for Westmoreland County, PA"
Polly, Westmoreland County

"I attended the Agent Orange Town Hall meeting to support chapter 862. After hearing the stories of parents and their children effected by Agent Orange, I then heard the term 'pericardia'. I never made the connection! A wake up call for me, that one of my kids with Pericardia is affected by Agent Orange. Every Veteran should know and watch the faces of Agent Orange on 'youtube'. Thank you!"
Bart, Beaver, PA



Faces of AGENT ORANGE

Oregon



The Hansens

By Jim Belshaw

Karl Hansen's son, Adam, had been dead five years before questions about Agent Orange arose. Until then, Karl had not given the herbicide a thought in all the years that followed his Vietnam tour of duty. But after Adam's death, he found himself reconsidering not only the tragedy that befell his son, but health problems faced by other of his children as well.

Burkitt's lymphoma, a form of cancer so rare that only 300 cases a year are reported in the United States, led to Adam's death. He was 25 years old. The exceptionally aggressive disease killed him so quickly that Karl had little time to investigate the rare cancer's mystery. After Adam died, Karl needed answers and began researching Burkitt's. It was in the course of that search that Agent Orange unexpectedly entered the discussion.

Karl served with the Army in Vietnam in 1968-69. He remembered the spraying, but thought little of it, even when he was in Vietnam.

"I didn't have a clue," he said. "I knew there was spraying going on, but I didn't know if it was for mosquitoes or what it was for. I didn't think about it at all when I was there. What caught my attention was the stuff I saw on the Internet and after I joined VVA and saw some of the articles on Agent Orange being written."

Karl and his wife had six children

— four daughters, then Adam, then another daughter, a birth order that was something of a family joke, because it was exactly the opposite of Karl's parents. His father, a Navy veteran, also had six children. But first came four boys, then a girl, then a boy.

Karl said Adam was a "wonderful kid." Neither a smoker or drinker, he steered clear of the trouble a boy might find growing up. He was a good student and built a reputation as a hard worker in every job he took on. At 25, he was a newlywed with a good job in Provo, Utah, managing the care of model homes for one of Utah's largest home builders. He was in his last semester at Brigham Young University and due to graduate. Karl was so proud of his son, who would be the first in the family to graduate from college.

Around Mother's Day 2005, Karl heard that Adam had been sick. He went to a doctor who diagnosed some kind of parasite.

But the problem persisted. Adam's stomach became distended, and on a visit to one of his sisters, she was shocked at the sight.

"When she saw him, she told him something was very wrong," Karl said. "She said, 'You've got something growing in you.'"

He went to a doctor again, and this time



Karl Hansen in Vietnam, 1968



Adam loved the outdoors



Adam with Mom and Dad; despite all, he fought with a smile



Faces of AGENT ORANGE

The Hansens' Story Continued...

he was hospitalized immediately. A colonoscopy showed cancer in his colon. The physician identified it as Burkitt's.

"I had never heard of it until I found out about Adam," Karl said.

Treatment was difficult. In the first round of chemo, Adam had a pulmonary embolism. The hospital "crash cart" kept him alive, and after a week in the ICU, he showed signs of recovery. Then came the second round of chemotherapy. It would be even worse. Severe neurological problems prevented him from performing the simplest movements. His eyes began to move in different directions, and the neurologist didn't know what was wrong. After two weeks, a nurse from a different department asked if anyone had tested for toxins in his blood. A test showed an ammonia level several hundred times higher than normal.

"There was nothing they could do for him," Karl said. "We had to let him go."

After Adam's death, Karl began the search for answers. In that search, he came across Agent Orange for the first time.

"I ran across something about someone's son who had died of Burkitt's, and a doctor told him several first-born sons of Vietnam veterans had died of it," Karl said. "The doctor wouldn't document it. So I don't know if it was someone shooting off his mouth, or if there was something to it. But it made me start thinking more about Agent Orange. I remembered at the base camps and firebases I spent time at that there was no foliage in the immediate area. There was a lot of dirt, but no foliage."

In *The VVA Veteran*, he read about the daughter of a Vietnam veteran who suffered from Raynaud's disease, which

causes discoloration of the fingers and toes, primarily. It is believed the disease decreases the blood supply to the affected areas.

Two of Karl Hansen's daughters suffer from Raynaud's. One has had it for several years; the second was diagnosed only months ago.

"She was at her daughter's soccer game, and it was rainy and cold," he said. "She took off her glove, and her fingers were white, almost to the knuckle."

Karl has been concerned about tremors in his hands. He worries that the coming years will make them only worse. He has another worry as well: One of his daughters has suffered from similar tremors for several years.

No one in his family or in his wife's family has any history of any of the diseases that have afflicted Karl and his children.

"What makes me sick is when I think about Agent Orange possibly having something to do with this and what it did to my kids," he said. "It just tears you up. I don't know if any of this will be passed on to my grandchildren. I have 12 grandchildren. I think there's a very good chance that all of this is connected to Agent Orange."

Significant numbers of veterans have children and grandchildren with birth defects related to exposure to Agent Orange. To alert legislators and the media to this ongoing legacy of the war, we are seeking real stories about real people. If you wish to share your family's health struggles that you believe are due to Agent Orange/dioxin, send an email to mporter@vva.org or call 301-585-4000, Ext. 146.

Many Thanks To Our Sponsors

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Did you know?

Agent Orange exposure, especially over long periods of exposure, has the ability to change basic cellular structure at a molecular and DNA level. These changes can cause or contribute to congenital birth defects, and even predisposition to certain health problems in the offspring of exposed people. Learn more about the generational effects of Agent Orange by visiting http://www.vva.org/veteran/1207/agent_orange_feature.html

Health Committee

The AVVA National Health Committee is very pleased to see so much interest in Agent Orange Town Hall meetings. This very important project is vital in raising awareness in our communities. The time is now to recognize that there is a problem with the health of our veterans and the generations to follow in their footsteps.

If you would like some guidance in planning a Town Hall meeting please contact Mokie Porter at the national office; 1-800-882-1316 ext. 146. Mokie can get you all the information that you may require.

Agent Orange related sites containing some valuable information:

- ◆ <http://agentorangezone.blogspot.com>
- ◆ <http://www.agentorangequiltotears.com>
- ◆ <http://www.agentorangebirthdefects.blogspot.com>
- ◆ <http://birthdefects.org/registry>
- ◆ <http://agentorangelegacy.com/>
- ◆ <http://www.youtube.com/user/facesofagentorange#p/a/u/0/uV2OybAd3IY>

Now is the time to take note of Agent Orange - please do not hesitate.

Membership Committee Report

Veterans Day at the Wall: Representing AVVA at the Veterans Day Ceremony was not only an honor, but, a very moving and educational experience. Sharon Hobbs (AVVA National Secretary) and I placed at wreath at the In Memory Plaque and also represented AVVA at the wreath ceremony at The Wall. Bill Williams (AVVA National Treasurer) represented AVVA at Arlington National Cemetery.

Having never participated in these events, it was amazing the number of organizations that honor our Veterans at the Wall. However, it was just as amazing to see only AVVA honor those who are remembered at the In Memory Plaque. One single wreath, placed by AVVA, stood alone to honor those who lost their lives due to the war. I was proud to be a member of the only organization that took the time to honor these deserving Veterans. I was saddened by the fact that no other organization honored them. Just another injustice to those who returned home only to lose their battle with life due to the war.

I also had the opportunity to work at the National Membership tent where I met many of our members. AVVA is working with VVA National Membership Committee to improve the membership set up for Veterans and Memorial Day.

I thank AVVA for these opportunities.

Cathy Keister

AVVA National Membership Chair

Strategic Planning Committee Report

The New Year is a time for change and resolution, signifying rebirth, renewal and an aspiration to excel. The Board of Directors extended to our membership that same promise during our annual meeting in Orlando and Reno. At the October 2011 Board meeting, "Core Values" of AVVA was accepted and has replaced the "Ground Rules" in the Policy and Procedure Manual.

It is our hope that every leader and member will embrace these new standards while representing AVVA.

Election Committee

The Election Committee is now accepting information for the database that will give us a quick reference to State and Chapter Representatives/Presidents and Officers if applicable.

Regional Directors: If you have not submitted your states information and would like more information - please contact Suzie Meeks, the Election Committee Database Coordinator at: Suziemeeks@aol.com

All you need is your chapters to submit - their information - Chapter Representative/President and officers to the State Representative/President. The State Representative/President then submits this information along with their state listing of officers to their Regional Director.

Needed information includes: state, name of individual and position served, date of election, term expiration, email address.

The Regional Director then submits this information to the Election Committee.

Please remember that in 2013, the Election Committee will need this information before the Chapter/State Representative/President will be able to be considered as a delegate to the National Convention.

It is the Election Committees goal to work with everyone on this matter. We want you all to have the correct information, so if you need any questions answered, please ask now and we can avoid any problems in the next year.

-Thank you everyone



If you are a Veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange—please be screened for Prostate Cancer

This image is a work of a U.S. Army soldier or employee, taken or made during the course of the person's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain.

Originally from U.S. Army Operations in Vietnam R.W. Trewyn, Ph.D. , (11) Huey Defoliation National Archives: 111-CC-59948, originally found in Box 1 Folder 9 of Admiral Elmo got a gun R. Zumwalt, Jr. Collection: Agent Orange Subject Files.

News from the Strategic Planning Committee

At the October 2010 National AVVA Board meeting, the Board worked their way through a Strategic Planning model called 'SWOT' to identify AVVA's (S)trengths, (W)eaknesses, (O)pportunities and (T)hreats. At this year's Leadership Conference

STRENGTHS:

- ◆ A good organizational foundation through our association with VVA
- ◆ Common Goals/common experiences/clear focus on Veterans issues
- ◆ Organization moving more towards being membership driven
- ◆ Improved communication
- ◆ Diversity, talent and skills of our members

WEAKNESSES:

- ◆ Lack of Incorporated States and Chapters and understanding of why the need to incorporate.
- ◆ Unsure of our destiny (If VVA is a last man standing organization, where will the chips fall for AVVA?)
- ◆ Public identity
- ◆ Lack of younger members
- ◆ Finances
- ◆ Lack of belief from some that AVVA will be the Legacy of VVA

in Reno, the membership was given the same opportunity to have your voices heard in determining the direction and future of AVVA. We heard and documented all of your input but for this article, a general synopsis of what you had to say will be presented.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- ◆ Expand Organizational Structure
- ◆ Partnering with other like organizations
- ◆ Improved Public relations/greater national visibility/National Press releases
- ◆ Involve our Legislators at local, state and National levels
- ◆ Outreach and membership drive programs

THREATS:

- ◆ Will we also be a last man standing organization? When VVA goes away, will we go away?
- ◆ Gossip, personal agenda's, lack of democracy
- ◆ No formal training for new Regional Directors, State Presidents/Rep's or chapter president/ reps
- ◆ Membership growing at a weak pace
- ◆ Perception of who we are and what we do/the need for clarity of our mission and vision

If you would like to contribute, please contact: nancyrekowski@hotmail.com

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America Core Values

As Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, we are passionate about our work and the real-life issues facing Veterans and their families. We strive to create a positive impact on our Veterans and their families by making life better. Our achievements are built on a solid

Commitment

In everything we do as Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, our perspective is based on the view of our members, Veterans and their families, ensuring that we understand their needs and expectations, and can prioritize and problem-solve for their unique challenges.

Ethics & Integrity

As a National Veterans Service Organization, we expect all conduct to be rooted in integrity, mutual respect, and civility. We value ethical behavior in our members and leaders at all levels of AVVA. We believe in the dignity and worth of all people, strive to foster an appreciation of and respect for diversity and differences among our leaders, members and peers.

We are committed to a teamwork environment where every Associate is a valued member, treated with respect, encouraged to contribute and recognized and rewarded for his/her efforts.

Everyone at AVVA is responsible for considering the ethical implications of each decision or action, and is urged to challenge assumptions, raise alternatives and seek out diversity.

Texas AVVA
wishes everyone
Happy Holidays!

Marilyn Rose
AVVA Texas State President



foundation of core values that inspire action, integrity, teamwork and outstanding results. Our values form the basis for decision-making and all actions of Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America – both as individuals and as a Veterans Service Organization.

Relevance

Our expertise and progressive, proactive atmosphere yield a powerful combination that continuously sets us apart. It is an approach that translates into timely decisions and executions, a constant quest for solutions, rapid responses to the media on issues facing Veterans and their families, legislative advocacy on all bills pertinent to the wellbeing of Veterans and their families and any issue that may make a tangible difference in the world around us for the better.

We anticipate opportunities and challenges, and are quick to confront complex or ambiguous situations. While we work with a sense of urgency, we always consider the impact of our actions before we proceed.

Teamwork

We believe knowledge is power and we support our Members' right to access information that impacts their roles as Veteran advocates. We also recognize everyone's right to be listened to and heard regardless of their point of view.

AVVA members are a team, loyal to one another, caring for each other both personally and professionally while being supportive of each other's efforts.

Our system of teamwork inspires people to make their best contributions, provides them with the support they need to be successful, promotes communication and celebrates their shared accomplishments.

We present a unified image, both visually and in behavior, so that we may insure the integrity of the organization while building a recognizable reputation as a service organization.

Region 1 Report

Veterans here in this area are helping each other along with their communities during this holiday season. Veterans who belong to and are networking with organizations such as Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion (Am Leg), Disabled America Veterans (DAV), Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), along with local organizations such as The Maine Troop Greeters, Wreaths Across America, the Cole Land Transportation Museum's Interview a Veteran Program, The Salvation Army, Local Radio Stations, Toys for Tots, Coats for Kids, and church organizations to name a few are donating both time and money to their local groups that provide assistance to active and inactive members of the armed services and their families as well as homeless shelters and food cupboards.

The renewed spirit of people helping people is what the season is all about. What I find even more beneficial is that the spirit that moves people to help each other is evident all year not just during the Holidays.

We here in Region 1 are continuing our efforts to reach out to veterans individually and through networking to support and assist each other.

On a personal note, my work life is starting to get back to "normal." Last summer the people working for the State of Maine working as Individual Support Coordinators, case managers for adults with developmental disabilities and autism were told that our positions with the state were on the list of positions that would be privatized over the next undefined period of time. The advice that was provided was if you have a position to go to, go. A coworker and I took that advice.

We decided to take the process one step further. We went through the process of being certified by MaineCare to provide the service in the private sector. We ended our employment with the State of Maine 12/02/11 and opened our private agency 12/05/11.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

Frances Cartier

Region II Report

submitted by Cathy Keister, Region II Director

New Jersey submitted by Irene Gratacos

Chapter 721 Shirley Goger

I can't believe Christmas is coming upon us as it seems everything is going so fast these days. Our chapter participated in a can shake and we had another planned but Mother Nature didn't allow it. We marched in two parades, one in Keansburg and the second parade was in Middletown. My favorite event was Veteran's Appreciation Day at Brighton Gardens. Each veteran received a framed certificate with a beautiful poem about we appreciate their service to our wonderful country. The residents appreciate the time we spend with them. Our chapter will be donating toys to local charities for Christmas, as well as making donations to Wounded Warriors and the Vietnam Memorial in Homdel. We also put ads in the USMC journal and the Keansburg parade journal.

CHAPTER 779 Irene Gratacos

Our color guard marched in the New York Veteran's Day on November 11th, (I did not march this year because I had fallen on November 7th and was injured), we had a can shake on November 19th and 20th at the Linden Shop rite, we also will be having another can shake on December 17th and 18th at the same location. We will be having our chapter Christmas Party on December 22nd at Costa's this year in Roselle Park.

CHAPTER 899 Irene Kleber

On October 15th & 16th 2011 AVVA Members participated with the New Jersey Mission of Honor at the Cranberry Festival in Chadsford, collecting donations and product sales. November 11, 2011, AVVA members attended a ceremony at Homdel for Roman Neidzwiedz's induction into the "Memory Program" at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial. November 22, 2011, Betty Kleber, AVVA representative attended Chapter 889's executive Board of Director's meeting and helped hand out turkeys to members and local charitable organizations. November 26, 2011, AVVA members attended Chapter 899's monthly meeting and assisted with setting up and serving lunch. December 17, 2011, AVVA members along with chapter members are preparing for our annual Christmas Party. Chapter 899 members continue to meet every arrival and deployment of troops at Fort Dix/Maguire. This started almost 7 years ago and someone has been at each and every in-bound since then, to show appreciation to the troops. New Jersey's Mission of Honor for Remains of American Veterans continues to be an important part of our chapter with Chapter 899 and AVVA members attending the monthly meetings. We also help with product sales and participate in fundraisers and all other activities.

Pennsylvania submitted by Nancy Rekowski

Pennsylvania State Association

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

The Association met in State College, PA for our October meeting. AVVA was pleased to welcome our new and returning Rep's. We were also very appreciative of the many VVA members that attended in support of AVVA.

We had a brief discussion on the advantages of Chapter Incorporation. President Rekowski stressed the importance of our AVVA members to attend the VVA tier meetings whenever time permits. A \$100 dollar grant was awarded to AVVA Chapter 862, Inc. to assist with expenses for their AO Town Hall Meeting.

In other business, the members selected PA AVVA's Project Friendship for 2012. \$500.00 will be donated to "Faces of Agent Orange" so that Mokie Porter can publish another Pennsylvania family's story on the legacy of Agent Orange.

To date, PA AVVA has assembled three "Quilts of Tears" with a fourth and fifth now being planned. Anyone wishing to submit a quilt square for your Veteran, please contact Linda Haberkorn or refer to the Quilts of Tears website for specifications. This year we will be accepting "legacy" quilt squares for children affected by the Agent Orange generational legacy.

AVVA ACTION REPORTS

CHAPTER 590 submitted by Dan Levy

Chapter 590 has raised \$5320.00 from parades this spring and summer. Last winter SGT Bucci Sheffield passed away. We held a memorial for him on Memorial Day. 590 will be parading November 11, 2011 at the Coastville Service Hospital in Coastville, PA. The past summer we had 3 major parades.

CHAPTER 623 submitted by Linda Kozak

Chapter 623 is working with VVA to raise funds for Wreaths Across America. Our goal is to cover as many graves at the West Point National Cemetery with wreaths as possible. Chapter 623 assisted VVA in fundraising to erect a monument honoring the Order of the Silver Rose at Veterans' Memorial Park and Education Center. The monument was unveiled and dedicated on July 30, 2011.

CHAPTER 862 submitted by Bobbi Morris

Chapter 862 has been very busy these past months with the following: Support our Troops Rally Beaver County in April, Spring Banquet in May, Chapter picnic in August, POW/MIA Bike Run which AVVA made 190 POW/MIA key chains to sell at the run in September.

Our AVVA Incorporated Chapter carried the AVVA flag with the honor guard for the dedication of Route 18 between Beaver Falls and Koppel which was named the Vietnam Veterans of America Memorial Highway and participated in the Gold Star Mothers' Banquet in September which was a great turnout. AVVA #862 baked a 137 dozen cookies for the Yellow Ribbon Program to send cookies to soldiers overseas.

We sold Agent Orange Poppy's in October and in November we held The Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting, Veterans' Day Parade, and the AO Balloon Release during the parade. In December we sold Christmas ornaments and had a Christmas Party after the meeting in December.

Region III Report

submitted by Donna-Marie Crowell, Region III Director

Since the Leadership Conference in Reno I have been very busy. I have attended several military ceremonies, a 'Change of Command' ceremony at Camp Lejeune and a Christmas Open House Reception given by the Commanding Officer of Camp Lejeune.

I attended two Beirut Memorial ceremonies, one at Camp Johnson and the other at Camp Geiger. The Kinston, N.C. Chapter sponsored the "Healing Wall". It was a very peaceful visit and healing for many Veterans. I also attended the Pearl Harbor ceremony and met a lovely survivor of the Pearl Harbor attack.

I'm preparing for the Region 3 Conference hosted by the North Carolina State Council, March 27-April 1, 2012 in Ashville, N.C.

I've been monitoring the contaminated water reports that happened at Camp Lejeune from the 1950's to 1987.

I keep in contact with the Region 3 State representatives and will be contacting them to set up dates to visit their State Council Meetings.

CHAPTER 272

We had a clothes drive for the Salvation Army and wrapped gifts and decorated for the Chapter Christmas party. AVVA members continue to promote fellowship among the Chapter by preparing meals for the monthly meeting. AVVA will be assisting the Chapter in selling the 'Forget-Me-Nots'.

CHAPTER 654

We represented the Chapter AVVA at several military ceremonies, visited Veterans at the nursing homes, assisting the handicap, baby-sitting for the active duty families, helping neighbors with clean up after Hurricane Irene, attended the Veteran Of the Year ceremony at City Hall, participated in the Veterans Day Parade, attended Veterans Day ceremony at the DAV, set up an information table at the Mall, made donations to Toys For Tots, Animal Shelter and donated the USO food for the meals prepared for the holiday.

CHAPTER 885

In February we had a joint fund raiser Valentine's Dance with Wilmington VFW (several of the AVVA members and husbands participated in the entertainment. In April we sponsored a "Welcome Home" Day for all Veterans, decorated the stage, sold hot dogs and Chick-fil-A sandwiches and provided hot coffee. We attended a ceremony honoring Veterans sponsored by the VFW in Surf City. Chapter members worked at the Air Show at the Wilmington International Airport by helping with trash pickup. In September, Chapter members attended the ground breaking for the new VA Clinic to be built on the Wilmington International Airport grounds and we presented a Lifetime Honorary Memberships to two widows of Chapter 885 members. In October we sponsored a team to walk for the American Cancer Society (Breast Cancer). The Chapter had a fish fry/covered dish picnic for family members.

In November we sold beverages and snacks to participants in the North Carolina Battleship marathon, served coffee to Veterans at the Wilmington VA Clinic and fed a family of a life member whose wife passed away suddenly. We attended the Veteran's Day Ceremony at the Veterans cemetery in Wilmington. In December we celebrated our annual Christmas Holiday dinner and hosted the Ashley House that provides housing for homeless veterans and giving those who attended a gift.

CHAPTER 909

Our AVVA assisted at the fundraising tables at the Cabarrus and Rowan County Fairs, Golden Corral, Historic Gold Hill, Tilley's Harley Davidson and Midland Magic. We also helped with making the selection of two recipients for \$500.00 scholarships from the "Gregory T. Scheffer Scholarship Fund" and assisted with a display for chapter 909 at the Old Court House Theater during the "Paying Tribute" presentation. Chapter 909 celebrated the holiday with Christmas dinner.

CHAPTER 962

We distributed water and nutrition bars to the runners who walked or ran the 15 miles during 'Take the Lake' at Lake Waccamaw. In September, we supported the DAV with their Boston Butt Fund raiser and in November Chapter 962 held their Boston Butt fund raiser. We participated in Belk's Charity Day and the laying of wreaths on Memorial Day at the Carolyn T. High Library honoring the men and women casualties of war. In June, several of the chapter members brought hygienic items for a group in Iraq whose sleeping quarter and personal effects were destroyed by mortar fire. In October we took part in a Memorial Ride for Anne Jennette Ward, sister of a VVA member. The donations were given to Lower Cape Fear Hospice Angel House in her honor. In November, we honored the Veterans with a special program held at the Library. On Veterans Day, we had a picnic with all area Veterans Organizations and their families. The annual Chapter Christmas Party rounded out our year.

The North Carolina State Council AVVA members sponsored an "Ice Cream Social" at the October meeting. It was something different and fun.

As always I am proud of what my Region 3 AVVA members are doing in their chapter.

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATES

As we look back at the year 2011, CA Associates are proud to say that we did have a productive year. We have been blessed with our membership and in retaining our members. At this date we have 726 valued members and growing. Thank you everyone.

One of the programs that we are most proud of is our Secondary PTSD tier that we have formed. Chaired by Nina Schloffel, we meet every three months during the CSC weekend. Attendance is great and we have many of our veterans joining us. A good, healthy discussion takes place with many thank you's being said at the close of the tier. We thank the CSC for lending us one of their meeting rooms at no charge to us.

Many of our AVVA along with their VVA chapters have held Agent Orange Town Hall meetings this past year. We feel that we are getting the much needed awareness to our communities. We do have an Agent Orange Committee at the state level also, with a complete report being given at the close of the CSC meeting.

Our CA chapters have been involved in many activities in 2011. Parades, assisting their chapters in fundraising, preparing and presenting community events, Christmas toy drives, feeding the homeless,

advocating for veteran rights and benefits, advocating for homeless veterans and so much more.

Our fundraising at the state level consists of product sales. This past year we have been fortunate to have been given some wonderful products to help us fund raise. January 2012 we will start the year off with some prints by a noted Australian artist that were donated to us by one of our women veterans that does support CA AVVA whole heartedly.

Lastly, we would like to thank the CA VVA State Council for being one of the best groups of guys and gals to work with. They truly stand for ~ Together Always.

Best wishes to you all from California.

CHAPTER 391 Sonora, CA

AVVA 391 has enjoyed working alongside with VVA Chapter 391 with the "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" and the "Traveling Wall" that was in Sonora, CA last March.

Our AVVA flag bearers for the 391 Color Guard, Kathy Davis and Laura McHenry, did a fabulous job carrying the AVVA flag at the parades in Sonora, Twain Harte and Tuolumne as well as at all the Memorial services.

AVVA 391 has a fundraiser going on.

We are in the process of selling cookbooks. Articles written by our VVA, AVVA members and friends and family. Have some great recipes in it,

I want to wish everyone a very pleasant 2012.

Carol Southern, AVVA 391 Chapter Rep.

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS & INFORMATION

Veterans Administration.....	1-800-827-1000
Veterans Benefits Hotline	1-800-827-1000
Veterans Bill of Rights	1-800-342-3358
VVA and AVVA in Washington	1-800-VVA-1316
V.V. Memorial Fund "The Wall"	1-202-393-0090
Nat.'l League of Families MIA/POW	
Updates	1-202-223-6846
National Caregivers Support Line.....	1-855-260-3274
Homeless Hotline	1-877-424-3838
Suicide Hotline.....	1-800-273-8255

WEBSITES & E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Veterans Widows International Network	
member@aol.com/vetwidows	
Military Family Network	emilitary.org