

Marine Corps League



Scuttlebutt

Newsletter Of Detachment 141, Westfield, Mass.

Volume 62, No. 4

www.mclwrv141.com

April 2007

VA Medical Centers Ready To Help Iraq Vets

No Delays For Warriors

Seeking Immediate Help

By Frank G. Real, Jr

Combat veterans recently retired or discharged from military service with wounds or stress related problems are immediately eligible for medical services at Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.

In a special interview with Scuttlebutt, Mary A. Dowling, director of VA Medical facilities in Western Mass. and Gonzalo H. Vera, MD, chief of Inpatient Mental Health services at the VA Medical Center at Leeds (Northampton), pledge that any eligible veteran will receive immediate care at the hospital or three clinics in Springfield, Greenfield and Pittsfield.

“To be eligible, all returning combat Veteran needs is his or her DD-214,” Ms. Dowling said.

She said benefits to all veterans tiered at various levels of eligibility, such as combat related injuries, times if service and income. “Medical and mental health services are available to all eligible veterans.

“Returning combat veterans our



U.S. military veterans are served by Veterans Medical Center in Northampton, and outpatient clinics in Springfield, Pittsfield and Greenfield. Mary A. Dowling, right, serves as director, and Gonzalo Vera, as chief of in-patient mental health.



immediate concern. They are thoroughly screened to find possible injuries they are not aware of,” Ms. Dowling related.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and brain injuries sometimes occur without the veteran being aware

of their situation, according to Dr. Vera.

The VA administrators said PTSD rates are as high as 40 to 50 per cent of returning Iraqi veterans.

(See Returning Vets Page 4)



In Appreciation

Dave Griffin of the Dowd Insurance Agency, left, accepts an Appreciation Certificate from . Commandant Francis J. Curnow for donating a computer and monitor to the Detachment.



Commandant Francis J. Curnow

Commandant's Corner.

Happy Easter to all....As the warm weather starts, so the activity level at the MCL will also. The Saturday breakfast boys report is "busier than ever with lots of help from the Young Marines." Kitchen NCOIC requests that if you are not part of the cooking crew please get your chow and keep the kitchen clear. It occasionally gets a little crazy back there!!

Tom Pirnie is looking for your input for the By-Law review. If you wish to participate in your Detachment this is an excellent way to have your voice heard. The Review Board will be meeting Wednesday nights for the next few weeks. Contact Tom for more info.

Don Rivette is busy with his duties as Ceremonial Officer. He is working on a class for Color guard, proper Flag ceremonies and associated details. All who desire to participate see Don. Don will also be coordinating parade participants for Memorial Day etc.(Those desiring to march or ride let Don know now!) Note April 22, 2007(.Sunday P.M.) Don has scheduled a gathering at the Soldiers Home in Holyoke. Volunteers call Don for details.

Detachment To Vote On By-Law Change To Insure New Members Served In Corps

A proposed By-Law change that would require those applying for regular membership in Detachment 141 to provide proof of service in the U. S. Marine Corps will be voted on at the April 9 meeting.

The vote would be the second taken on the By-law change proposed by Judge Advocate Thomas Pirnie. It was unanimously approved at the March meeting.

The proposed amendment reads in part:

1. The individual who would like to

become a member must present in person a DD214 or valid ID card.

- 2. In the situation of an individual who is a member of the Marine Corps League-At-Large, the individual must present a copy of their DD214 or a valid military ID.
- 3. The individual would give permission to Detachment 141 a month to examine the application and the DD214.
- 4. If the applicant is found qualified , the applicant will be notified to at-

Regarding Veterans needs, you may also contact your local town Veteran Service officer to assist if you are having a particular problem. Please that Jim Berrelli , an associate member, is also the West Springfield VSO. That's all for now. .See you at the next meeting. Semper Fi, Fran C.

tend the next scheduled meeting to be voted on by the membership and sworn in.

5. The DD214 will be returned to new member.

It is also announced that the Judge Advocate and detachment officers will be meeting each Wednesday at 1900 beginning April 4 to do an entire review of the Detachment By-laws.

Calendar of Events

April 1– Deadline for Scholarship Applications.

April 9 - Regular Detachment Meeting 1700. Social Hour 1800.

April 14 - Parker Park, Westfield, 1:00 PM

Patriots Day Ceremonies - American Legion Post 454

April 22– Volunteers meeting-Holyoke Soldiers Home 1400.

Sick Call

Art Fisher and David Tirell, both recovering at Holyoke Soldiers Home. Waldo Rankin (The Admiral) recovering at home from a broken hip. Robert Killam recovering at home after surgery.

Detachment 141 Meets Monthly On 2nd Monday. Social Hour1800 Meeting 1900.

Young Marines Visit Quantico Marine Museum

By Karl M. Rexer
PAO, Westover Young Marines

For YM Private Alex J. Sieracki, being able to gaze up at the incredible glass and steel spire of the National Museum of the Marine Corps with his own eyes made the long journey to Marine Corps Base Quantico worthwhile.

“Just seeing the building and walking into it instead of seeing it in a magazine is amazing,” the 11-year-old said. “I loved seeing the flag from Iwo Jima, I can’t believe I was so close to it.”

The Westover Young Marines, along with units from Old Colony and Three Rivers, made a pilgrimage to the museum on December 27 during the kid’s Christmas school break. In all more than 150 Young Marines spent a day exploring some of the most pivotal events in the history of the nation and of the Marine Corps through the museum’s exhibits, films and artifacts.

Gazing up through the 210-foot spire, suspended as if in flight, are four famous aircraft used by the Marines- a Curtiss “Jenny” from the 1920s, a pair of Corsair fighters from World War II and an AV-8B Harrier “jump jet.”



Young Marines from Westover pose in front of the Marine Corps Museum and Heritage Center at Quantico, Virginia, during a December 27, 2006 field trip.

Below them visitors can see an LTV-1 amphibious tractor breaching a defensive barrier on the Pacific island of Tarawa and a Sikorsky HRS-2 helicopter landing a machine gun unit in Korea. A guide explains that each mannequin is molded from a facial cast taken from a different person, giving each unique features and expressions.

Other exhibits include the

making of Marines, which gives visitors a chance to experience for themselves what it takes to become a Marine, and the World War II, Korean and Vietnam War Galleries, which put visitors right in the middle of some of the most important battles of those wars.

YM Private Kyle J. Bessette said he liked the way the museum presented history from the perspective of the average Marine.

“I liked seeing all the weapons and I really liked seeing all the displays about the wars Marines have fought in,” Bessette, 10, said. “I always wondered what Korea and Vietnam were all about, so this was a good way to learn.”

YM Corporal Cristiana Jamroyz, 14, said the layout of the museum and its exhibits make learning particularly easy. “I was impressed by the building and the way it draws you into the history of the Marines,” Jamroyz said.

“You start with Making marines and its chronological from there, it’s very well set up. “It’s just amazing to me what the Marines have done.”

Scuttlebutt

Scuttlebutt is the official newsletter of Westfield River Valley, Detachment 141, Marine Corps League, and is intended only for the information of its members. Articles and photos do not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Marine Corps or the Marine Corps League. Detachment Headquarters is at 71 North Elm St., Westfield, MA 01085. 413--562-4850. Items for publication should be dropped off the headquarters or by contacting the editor or associate editor.
Web Site www.mclwrv141.com

Commandant Francis Curnow 413- 786-0855.

Editor At Large Frank G. Real, Jr. 413-348-5572

Associate Editor Michael Burke 413-301-2792

Feature Editor Karl M. Rexer 413-433-4180

Combat Vets Get Top Priority At VA

(Continued from Page 1)

“They see a lot of horrible things and it affects them. Many are unaware they are suffering from PTSD,” Dr. Vera said.

Ms. Dowling stressed news reports that indicate that many of the returning veterans have brain disorders from explosions that were close to them but did not cause apparent injuries.

“Every incoming combat veteran is questioned thoroughly by our doctors about what was happening around them,” she said.

Press reports that the Department of Defense and VA computers are not compatible for transferring veteran’s medical records are true for the most part but does not pose a serious problem.

“Certainly, it is inconvenient but not necessarily a problem. Our doctors and staff question each veteran and take appropriate tests to make each patients record current,” Ms. Dowling said.

She said the VA and DOD are working on the problem and in some areas have already made the computer updates.

“It they find the veteran has an immediate need for treatment, it is initiated either here or at an appropriate facility,” the VA director said.

Ms. Dowling explained the Leeds facility has beds only for acute and chronic mental illness, as well as long term care.

“Those with acute or immediate medical needs are transferred to other area VA hospitals in White River Junction,

Vermont, West Haven, Conn., and hospitals in the Boston area. “It all depends on their need.”

The VA outpatient clinics in Springfield, Pittsfield and Greenfield offer primary medical services, treatment of chronic medical conditions, non-emergency medical conditions and mental health services. A pharmacist is on duty in Springfield.

The VA Medical Center at Leeds has a 24 hour, 7 day walk in clinic for non-emergency medical needs.

Ms. Dowling reports that more than 15,000 veterans are served by the Northampton VA Medical Center, including nearly 600 who served in Afganastan and Iraq.

Prior to being named director of the Western Mass. VA facilities, she served in a similar position in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

A registered nurse, she is a retired lieutenant colonel with more than 20 years service in the U.S. Army Reserve. She has served with the VA for more than 20 years and also worked in the private sector medical field.

Dr. Vera is a native of Cuba, graduate from medical school in Spain and has served in the VA since 1990, first in North Carolina and at Leeds in the Mental Health field.

The VA is not the only agency concerned with the current flap over the treatment of returning Afghanistan and Iraqi combat veterans.

The U.S. Congress is holding hearings on facility maintenance, especially at Walter Reed Army Hospital, but at all medical facilities, including VA hospitals, treating veterans.



New Members Sworn In

Two Marines take the oath of office as members of Detachment 141, Marine Corps League at the March Meeting. At left, Mark Dunne of West Springfield and Leila Connolly of Westfield.

Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans’ Services Tom Kelley is reaching out to the returning veterans seeking information from those who have had healthcare needs that have not been met or VA benefits that have not been processed within a reasonable amount of time.

“What I’m most concerned about is that we are doing everything possible to make sure that the needs of our returning veterans are being met by the federal government, and learning what we can do to help,” said Kelley.

“We also need input from family members and friends of our veterans. We need to be sure that our veterans are aware of all of the benefits they are entitled to.”

Any returning veteran who is having difficulty securing benefits or health care through the federal VA system or who is seeking employment upon return is encouraged to contact the Dept. of Veterans Services via its web site or by calling the office at 617-210-5782.