



Chattanooga Area Veterans Council

Serving veterans and their organizations of Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama

TriState Women Veterans Unit #157 Chartered

Some 40 military women joined by family and friends launched the inaugural unit of Military Women Across the Nation in Chattanooga on Saturday, June 20, 2015. TriState Women Veterans, a network of military women from Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama who have met socially for several years were chartered as Unit #157 of Military Women Across the Nation, a federally-chartered, 501(c)19 veteran service organization. "Overwhelmed is an understatement!" Unit President Rita Waller said commenting on the "room full of beautiful military women" who came out to join and support the unit. Rita served in the U.S. Army and in the U.S. Marine Corps during the 1970's and 1980's. "This has been a wonderful experience because when I came back, I was lonely and had no sisters to call my own," she said. "I was at a bible retreat and met Sandy Hughes (another unit member and U.S. Army veteran) who said, 'Have you heard about TriState Women Veterans?' That was the beginning of a fantastic relationship."

The new unit's 36 (and counting) charter members include women who have served in the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force as well as the Army and Air National Guard. Several members have served in multiple services. "We still need to find some Coast Guard gals," said U.S. Navy-retiree Patty Parks. As the Tennessee State Director for Military Women Across the Nation, Patty conducted the unit chartering ceremony and officer installation. She is also Unit #157's Treasurer. Other unit officers include First Vice President Cathy Brown who served in the Women's Army Corps from 1966 through 1968 and Secretary Gloria Gray, an Air Force veteran.

TriState Women Veterans evolved into more than just a social group as local military women sought answers and assistance regarding veteran benefits and desired to do more in the service of their communities along with sharing their common histories, Patty said. To allow greater variety in their service options TriState Women Veterans members voted in October 2014 to join Military Women Across the Nation.

TriState Women Veterans, Unit #157 will continue to serve and support all military women in the Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama areas. If you are interested in joining TriState Women Veterans Unit #157, please contact Patty Parks at (423) 326-0839 or via email at pattyjoparks@yahoo.com.



Air Force: (Left-Right) Kit Standefer; Adrienne McMillan; Rebecca Jacobs; Jo Ruta; Gloria Gray; Martha Levardsen; Gigi Albi; Susan Lindsey, and Robin Flockerzi.



Army: (Left to Right) Seated: Sheila Billings and Rita Waller. Standing: Deborah James; Debra Shadwick; Cathy Brown; JROTC Cadet Jessica Dillard; Renee Chisholm; Shelly Galloway; Angela Lawrence; Beth Wingfield; Lurline Person, and Deborah Kendrick.



Navy: (Left to Right) Seated: Gloria Wix, Patty Parks and Chris Huber. Standing: Linda Cantrell; Deanna Allman, Lisa Suchenicz; Donna Henderson, Barbara Pascoe, Carol Ransom; Tina Hale; Pat Shay, Laura Holder; Arran Grazier Williams; Wendy Burke, Joyce Campbell.

Write a Letter to a Soldier

Our military men and women serving overseas, on ships or in war zones don't always get mail or have someone back home writing to them. Even if they do it's always nice to know you are being thought of and appreciated. While we sit here in the safety of our homes and country they are there on the "front lines" protecting us and our way of life. Let's show them some gratitude and appreciation for their service by writing and letting them know it. Below is a list of several organizations with links to provide letters/cards/etc. to those serving in uniform.



<http://www.operationgratitude.com/>
<http://soldiersangels.org/>
<http://www.operationwearehere.com/>
<http://www.military.com/memorial-day/support-troops-and-families.html>
<http://adoptaussoldier.org/>
<http://neighborhood.vivint.com/safe-neighbor/how-to-show-appreciation-to-military-families/>

6th Cav Museum Renovations Have Begun

Stanley Richardson, LLC from Dalton, GA was awarded the contract to install three handicap accessible restrooms and a 2nd floor lift. The \$116,000 that was



earmarked for this renovation began with Catoosa County Commissioner Ken Marks back in 2009. Marks is the nephew of the late 6th Cavalryman and Association Commander J.C. Watson and tells how he promised his uncle to help the museum if he was ever in a position to do so. Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax or SPLOST provided the funding. The renovations are due for completion in early September.

Free Dental, Vision and Medical Clinic

Remote Area Medical will host a clinic July 11th & 12th at Walker Valley High School, 750 Lauderdale Memorial Hwy, Cleveland, TN, 37312. Doors will open at 6:00 am on the 11th but volunteers will pass out entry numbers starting at 3:00 am. The event is first-come, first-served. Patients will begin lining up as early as Thursday afternoon to ensure that they receive a place in line. Check the weather, and dress accordingly. Bring your regular medications, and take them as you normally would. Expect long waits. There are many people seeking medical care. Patient patience goes a long way.

Free services provided by volunteer licensed health professionals will include:

- Dental: cleanings, fillings, and extractions
- Vision: eye exams & free eyeglasses
- Medical: diabetic screening and education, PAP smears, rapid result HIV tests, rapid result HepC tests and mammograms (Saturday only)

Information provided by Jennifer A. Martin, Consortia Coordinator, Southeast Tennessee Development District, Tel: (423) 424-4257.

Veterans Court Update

Several judges have decided to undertake a veterans court in Hamilton County. This court will help some veterans who are in criminal trouble to receive a second chance.

The court diverts eligible veterans from the traditional criminal justice system and allows them to receive specialized support and rehabilitation under court supervision. The Veterans Administration and/or other private counseling organizations provide tailored counseling and treatment to the veteran.

A unique component of the veterans court is the use of mentors. Mentors are concerned veterans (and select civilians) who volunteer to provide encouragement and assistance to a veteran involved in the criminal justice system and to his family. Mentors provide this help as the veteran progresses through the various phases of his rehabilitation/treatment.

More mentors are needed. Please support the formation of the court and consider being a mentor.

For more information contact Chris Dooley at ruffian19@gmail.com

VISTA is recruiting in Chattanooga

Who are VISTA Members?

VISTA Members are men and women who have a desire to make a difference in a community. VISTA Members help to bring others out of poverty through establishment of sustainable infrastructure for local non-profit organizations.



VISTA
Volunteers In Service To America

What is the VISTA Project?

Increase community awareness and support of Signal Center's services specifically for veterans and military families. As a result, at least 30 veterans annually will receive job training and placement, educational services, training on use of assistive technology, and therapeutic services. These services will improve veterans' quality of life and equip them with the skills and tools needed to overcome poverty.

What will the VISTA Member do?

The VISTA Member will serve full-time for one year. Activities will include: increase community awareness of services and benefits that are available to veterans and military families; become versed in Signal Centers mission and services, with concentrated focus on services that may benefit veterans; establish the means for veterans and military families to receive needed services from Signal Centers; establish the means to recruit veterans to serve as community volunteers in direct service provision; explore new partnerships with agencies that work directly with individuals with disabilities, veterans, military family members, and Veterans Serving Organizations.

What will I receive as a VISTA Member?

VISTA Members will receive an annual living allowance of \$11,676 (paid bi-weekly via direct deposit), health coverage, child care if eligible, ten personal days per service year, ten sick days per service year, pre-service orientation and training, and the choice between two different end of service awards: a cash stipend of \$1,500 or an education award of \$5,730. The education award can be used to repay student loans or to pay for future education expenses at accredited institutions.

For more information contact:
Denise Meise, VISTA Project
Supervisor at
731-616-3102 or via email at
denise.meise@star-center.org



WelcomeHome
of Chattanooga

**Shelter, healing and
compassionate end of life
care for those who are in
need**

Welcome Home of Chattanooga began with six friends of diverse backgrounds gathering together in prayer and mindfulness, recognizing a need for shelter for those who are seriously ill. With encouragement, we were able to turn "we wish" into "we can do". Founding members include Sherry Campbell, Rachel Smith, Cassandra Smith, Christie Smith, Lauren Jones and Duane Wade. We acknowledge that the only way our city's first comfort home will be successful is for it to be for the community and by the community- supported with partnerships with friends, agencies, neighbors, churches- all are welcome and invited to the table. Our current directors are Dr. Steve Coulter, Corinne Henderson, Kathy Lennon, Mary Beth Lynch, Rachel Smith, Duane Wade, Beverly Hill and John Kerns. We are also very grateful for our friends who provide wisdom and support.

Welcome Home provides:

- A 3-4 bed home with trained staff and volunteers to provide support & care
- partnerships with local hospices who will provide professional care
- A place of support and community for those in need
- Assistance with applying for appropriate benefits for residents
- Comfortable and well maintained home that helps to revitalize and benefit the community
- Education for students and the community regarding the discussion and care around death and dying

This is done by:

- Working with a local hospice to provide in home medical care and support
- Investing in and benefiting from partnerships, friendships and guidance from local groups, agencies, churches and synagogues, neighbors, universities and hospitals.- building relationships with residents and one another to impact and improve end of life care in Chattanooga.
- Requesting that residents pay on a sliding scale for room and board. Funding will also come through fundraising, donations and grants, as well as in-kind, for impact gifts.

For more info contact Welcome Home at 423-355-5842.

VA Health Care Access Update

One year after outrage about long waiting lists for health care shook the Department of Veterans Affairs, the agency is facing a new crisis: The number of veterans on waiting lists of one month or more is now 50 percent higher than it was during the height of last year's problems, department officials say. The department is also facing a nearly \$3 billion budget shortfall, which could affect care for many veterans. The agency is considering furloughs, hiring freezes and other significant moves to reduce the gap. Agency officials expect to petition Congress this week to allow them to shift money into programs running short of cash. But that may place them at odds with Republican lawmakers who object to removing funds from a new program intended to allow certain veterans on waiting lists and in rural areas to choose taxpayer-paid care from private doctors outside the department's health system. "Something has to give," the department's deputy secretary, Sloan D. Gibson, said in an interview. "We can't leave this as the status quo. We are not meeting the needs of veterans, and veterans are signaling that to us by coming in for additional care, and we can't deliver it as timely as we want to."

Since the waiting-list scandal broke last year, the department has broadly expanded access to care. Its doctors and nurses have handled 2.7 million more appointments than in any previous year, while authorizing 900,000 additional patients to see outside physicians. In all, agency officials say, they have increased capacity by more than seven million patient visits per year — double what they originally thought they needed to fix shortcomings. But what was not foreseen, department leaders say, was just how much physician workloads and demand from veterans would continue to soar — by one-fifth, in fact, at some major veterans hospitals over just the past year.

According to internal department budget documents obtained by The New York Times, physician workloads — as measured by an internal metric known as "relative value units" — grew by 21 percent at hospitals and clinics in the region that includes Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina; by 20 percent in the Southern California and southern Nevada regions; and by 18 percent in North Carolina and Virginia. And by the same measure, physician care purchased for patients treated outside the department grew by 50 percent in the region encompassing Pennsylvania and by 36 percent in the region that includes Michigan and Indiana. Those data include multiple appointments by individual patients and reflect the fact that patients typically now schedule more appointments than they did in the past. But even measured by the number of individuals being treated, the figures are soaring in many places: From 2012 to

2014, for example, the number of patients receiving treatment grew by 18 percent at the Las Vegas medical center; by 16 percent in Hampton, Va.; and by 13 percent in Fayetteville, N.C., and Portland, Ore.

Mr. Gibson said in the interview that officials had been stunned by the number of new patients seeking treatment even as the V.A. had increased its capacity. He said he was frustrated that the agency was running short of funds. "We have been pushing to accelerate access to care for veterans, but where we now find ourselves is that if we don't do something different we're going to be \$2.7 billion short," he said. He said he planned to tell Congress this week that the agency needed to be able to shift funds around to avoid a crisis this fiscal year. That includes using funds from a new program that was a priority for congressional Republicans called the "Choice Card," which allows certain veterans to obtain taxpayer-funded care from private doctors. That money would be used to pay for hepatitis C treatments and other care from outside doctors. In future years, Mr. Gibson said, more money will also be needed. He said he intended to tell lawmakers, "Veterans are going to respond with increased demand, so get your checkbooks out."

The largest driver of costs has been programs designed to send patients to outside doctors, either because of delays seeing V.A. clinicians or because patients need treatments outside the system. Other major factors include the demand for new prosthetic limbs and for the new hepatitis C treatment. The "daily obligation rate in medical services" inside the Veterans Health Administration — the part of the department that handles medical care — is \$166 million, or 9.2 percent higher than last fiscal year, according to a presentation last week for senior department leaders. Costs for drugs and medications have risen by nearly 17 percent, with much of the increase because of the new hepatitis C treatment, according to the document. An agency memo from last month stated that the need for the new hepatitis C treatment "has greatly outpaced V.A.'s ability to internally provide all aspects of this care."

But many experts say the principal problems were a shortage of doctors and nurses in the system, the nation's largest integrated health care organization, and a lack of office space for patient care — while demand rose sharply from aging Vietnam War veterans and service members from Iraq and Afghanistan. The department's inspector general eventually concluded that "the systemic underreporting of wait times resulted from many causes, to include the lack of available staff and appointments, increased patient demand for services, and an antiquated scheduling system." [Source: The New York Times | Richard A. Ooppel | June 20, 2015 ++]

Agent Orange / C-123 Aircraft - VA Reverses Itself

Reversing a long-held position, the Department of Veterans Affairs now says Air Force reservists who became ill after being exposed to Agent Orange residue while working on planes after the Vietnam War should be eligible for disability benefits. The VA published an interim final rule on June 18 to allow veterans to apply for disability compensation and VA care for any of 14 presumptive medical conditions due to exposure to Agent Orange. The VA said it has been working to finalize a rule that could cover military personnel who flew or worked on Fairchild C-123 aircraft in the U.S. from 1972 to 1982. Many of the Vietnam-era planes, used by the reservists for medical and cargo transport, had sprayed millions of gallons of herbicide during the 1955-1975 military conflict in Southeast Asia. All airman are encouraged to file a disability compensation claim through the VA's eBenefits web portal (<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>) who were assigned to flight, ground or medical crew duties at:

- Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (the 906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadrons),
- Massachusetts's Westover AFB (the 731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron),
- 758th Airlift Squadron in Pittsburgh, during the period 1969 to 1986, and

VA will process all claims related to C-123 exposure at the St. Paul, Minnesota, VA Regional Office. Claims not filed through eBenefits should be mailed to the following address (or faxed to 608-373-6694): Department of Veterans Affairs, Claims Intake Center, Attention: C123 Claims, PO Box 5088, Janesville, WI 53547-5088. Individuals with specific benefit questions related to herbicide exposure on C-123s may call VA's special C-123 Hotline at 1-800-749-8387 or e-mail VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov.

Visit www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/claims-postservice-agent_orange.asp for more information on applying for these benefits, including the affected units, Air Force Specialty Codes and dates of service for affected crew members. Visit http://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/claims-postservice-agent_orange.asp for a listing of Agent Orange-related conditions.

The upcoming rule would not include roughly 200,000 "Blue Water" veterans who say they were exposed to Agent Orange while serving aboard deep-water naval vessels off Vietnam's coast, according to two VA officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. [Source: Associated Press | Hope Yen | June 15, 2015 ++]

Recreational Water Illness

When temperatures peak, heading for the nearest lake or pool is a fast and fun way to cool down. Unfortunately, accidents and illnesses can happen in the midst of fun, so be sure you know how to get care when you need it. In addition to being great exercise, swimming is a great way to stay cool. But make sure the water is sanitary. Contrary to popular belief, chlorine does not kill all germs instantly. Many germs today are tolerant to chlorine and can take minutes or even days to die. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report a rise in recreational water illnesses (RWI) over the past 20 years. RWIs include a wide variety of skin, ear, respiratory and other infections. To combat the spread of these infections, be sure to monitor the chlorine level in your pool and make sure it remains at a safe level.



If you find that you or a family member is sick after being in the water, you should determine if urgent care is sufficient or if you are having an emergency. TRICARE defines an emergency as the sudden and unexpected onset of a medical condition or the acute exacerbation of a chronic condition that is:

- Threatening to life, limb or eyesight
- Requires immediate medical treatment
- Manifests painful symptoms

You can also call the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line for help at 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273). When you call, you can talk to a registered nurse who can answer your questions, give you health care advice and if necessary, help you find a doctor and schedule an appointment. If your child is ill, you can also talk to a nurse with specialized pediatrics training. Be sure your child is near when you call the nurse in case they need to ask questions or speak directly to your child. For more information about getting Emergency Care, visit the TRICARE website

<http://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/EmergencyCare.aspx>. For information about recreational water illnesses, visit the CDC's Healthy Swimming/Recreational Water web page <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi>. [Source: TRICARE Communications | Healthy Living | June 15, 2015 ++]