



"IT'S ABOUT THE VETERAN."



July 20, 2015

Family and Human Services Committee
Dorothy Sansoe, Senior Deputy County Administrator
Contra Costa County Family and Human Services Committee
651 Pine Street, 10th floor
Martinez, CA 94553

Dear Ms. Sansoe and members of the Family and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you about Contra Costa County's FIRST Stand Down event to serve our community's Veterans. Delta Veterans Group (DVG) is very grateful for the wide base of local support as we host this event, and continue to provide counseling and connection to Veterans in Contra Costa County.

This year, DVG is undertaking its largest challenge to date by hosting its first ***Stand Down on the Delta*** September 11-14 at the Contra Costa Fairgrounds in Antioch, CA. DVG is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization in its second year of operation, and is staffed 100% by volunteers who provide services to veterans from all over the Bay Area at our location in Antioch California. It is estimated that between 1,500 and 2,000 volunteers will participate in the *Stand Down on the Delta*, to help serve our Veterans, who have sacrificed and served us all.

This Stand Down comes at a critical time for Contra Costa County, as nonprofits serving Veterans such as Delta Veterans Group, corporations and businesses, foundations, the faith community, County Health Services, the Veterans Administration, local hospitals, law enforcement, and other sectors dealing with homeless persons come together as a part of **Zero: 2016**. Zero: 2016 is an initiative by 70 communities nationwide to end Veteran homelessness within one year, with housing subsidy and wrap-around supportive services to get Vets off of the streets and on the road to reintegration in society. New federal and other resources are coming together to accomplish achieve that goal, and Contra Costa County's **FIRST EVER** "Stand Down" is a key vehicle to drive this effort.

As you may know, there is a disproportionately large percentage of Veterans in the homeless population, and homeless female Veterans are growing in number as their representation in the military has increased in recent years. The 2015 Point in Time count of homeless persons *in Contra Costa County alone* documented **140 homeless Veterans** living on the streets and in encampments or in emergency shelter on January 26th this year. The issues these Vets are facing are complex, and range from needing a place to call home to needing employment training and placement, medical and dental care, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, and so on.

Stand Down on the Delta Overview

DVG Board members and volunteers have participated in numerous Stand Down events in the Bay Area over past years, and will be bringing experience, best practices, and key skills to the implementation of *Stand Down on the Delta* in 2015. Planning for the Stand Down has been ongoing during the past year. The event will integrate personal health and wellness care with housing, employment, legal and a myriad of

support services, enlivened by bands and recreation opportunities for not only the men and women who are veterans, but for their families as well.

Based on the number of attendees at regional Stand Downs in the Bay Areas and Central California, and given that this Stand Down will occur on the “off year” of the East Bay Stand Down, DVG is anticipating 250 veterans will be attending. Veterans will pre-register prior to the event, so a more actionable number will be available by August 1, 2015. At this point, DVG is planning for 300 participants so that no one will have to be turned away. DVG expects to serve single male and female Veterans, as well as dependents (spouses and children). Women Vets and dependents and children will have separate, fenced accommodations, as well as services and activities for each group.

DVG will be serving both VA eligible and ineligible veterans at this event. VA eligibility will be ascertained through preregistration information obtained, and DD 214 status will be verified by the Veterans Administration through VA/Homeless Continuum of Care (COC) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) collaboration in Contra Costa County. Veterans meeting VA eligibility criteria will receive VA medical and other services. Veterans not meeting the VA standards of eligibility will receive services from the Contra Costa County Health Care for the Homeless Team, utilizing the County Medical and Dental Services vans and staff.

Following is an summary of *Stand Down on the Delta* activities and services:

Friday, September 11, 2015

On Friday, preregistered Veterans will be transported to the site in the morning by buses and wheelchair accessible vans, accompanied by trained volunteers. Upon arrival at the fairgrounds, Vets will present registration documentation and go through Check In process. Check-in matches each participant with their packet, volunteers will obtain participant clothing sizes (shirt, pant, shoes, etc.), and will review the medical, court, and service plan. Vets will enter the secure area, account for and store their personal items in secure, on-site cargo containers, pick up a new sleeping bag, a personal care kit and generous bag lunch and water, and proceed to their tent. There they will meet their Tent Coordinator and have time to get acquainted, eat and rest.

Groups will proceed to medical triage for evaluation and development of a medical/dental service plan and plan for detox if needed. This activity will continue through the day to attend to all participants. Those requiring wound care or other medical services such as diabetes intervention, will be taken to on-site treatment room. Medications will be taken from participants, and dispensed by on-site physicians during the event. Physicians will also prescribe medications in some cases. The VA, EMTs and nurses from local nursing schools will staff examination rooms in the permanent buildings on the Fairground site. Qualified participants will be referred to the VA for follow-up care, while others will be referred to the County for follow up services.

While some groups are in the medical track, other groups will proceed to clothing distribution. Court participants will be flagged and will be expedited to Friday and Saturday court. Still other groups will access the 16 on-site showers, in either the men’s or women’s quarters. Participants will be able to shower and clean in the afternoon, and personal care services such as hair cutting will be available at that time and on Saturday.

Entertainment begins as the first participants arrive, and continues throughout the day will a full schedule of bands and singers. Friday night activities will include the Opening Ceremony, a delicious hot dinner, and great entertainment.

Saturday, September 12

On Saturday Vets will rise and go to morning formation then on to a hot breakfast by groups, women and children first. The Resource building (Bldgs #2 and #3 unless there is court) will be opened. The Contra Costa and Alameda County court system representatives will be present to help clear tickets resulting from being homeless, and will assign community service hours that can be carried out during the Stand Down.

A variety of counseling will be provided on Social Security disability, Veterans benefits and other benefits to link Veterans to income source, housing and health care sources. Information and counseling will be provided on HIV/AIDs, Hepatitis C, and Agent Orange, as well as substance abuse, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other health conditions. Various social services (see next section) will also be provided, linking vets to emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, and voucher subsidized housing opportunities, as well as employment and benefits services.

Podiatry, dental and vision exams (and possibly hearing) will occur throughout the day. Most will get haircuts at this time, and can access a variety of wellness services such as massages, acupuncture, and chiropractors.

An array of recreation services, including games, arts and crafts, reading materials, and much more, will be available for all groups within their areas. Pet services, such as bathing, grooming and minor veterinary services, will also be provided for Veterans bringing their animals.

A delicious lunch will be served and healthy fruit and other snacks and water will be available throughout the day. After lunch, dependents and children will be treated to free roller skating at Paradise Skate close by.

Available throughout the entire event will be tents for Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and support, as well as detox and withdrawal services. Medical doctor(s) will be on staff 24 hours a day to dispense medications, monitor withdrawal, to handle emergencies, and so on. Chaplains, Rabbis, Priests, and representatives of various faiths will also staff a counseling tent 24/7 throughout the event, and will be available for counseling and support.

The day will conclude with a delicious dinner and a variety of musical and other entertainment.

Sunday, September 13

Service delivery will continue on Sunday. Additional entertainment includes a fishing trip on the nearby Delta for 60 Veterans, chosen by a blind drawing. Vets who may have never fished will be taught this handy skill and all fish caught that day will be prepared and cooked at the Fish Fry Sunday evening (as well as some fish purchased for the occasion!) Entertainment continues throughout the day and evening.

Monday, September 14, 2015

Monday brings the Delta Veterans Group's first *Stand Down on the Delta* to an end with a Closing ceremony. Participants will be provided with clear plastic bags to take clothes, their sleeping bag and other acquisitions from the weekend. They will visit the property lockup to receive their original belongings back, and board buses between 11:30 – 12:00 p.m. Volunteers will then proceed to break down tents, take down fencing, pick up the facility, transport containers back to the American Legion, and bid farewell. A Debriefing will be held with Committee leaders and all interested personnel on September 17th, while the event is still fresh in everyone's minds.

Service Provision and Agencies

DVG continues to solicit support from agencies which will be providing a wide range of services to local veterans. Services and agencies identified to date include:

- **Transportation** – Buses will pick up participants from identified sites throughout Contra Costa County, and from the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART station, and all buses will be accompanied by trained volunteers. Transportation will include wheelchair accessible vehicles. *Transportation provided at reduced cost by First Student, but needs funding.*
- **Food and refreshments** – Veterans will be provided with three fresh, hot meals each day, cooked by volunteers from the faith community and prepared in the onsite kitchen. The local faith community and Loaves and Fishes, which has a large commercial kitchen nearby, will be cooking and providing meals for all veterans and volunteers. *Some snacks and water may need to be purchased.*
- **Clothing and shoes** – both men's and women's clothing and shoes will be provided, thanks to donations of new and used clothing from a variety of community partners. *We are seeking donations of new under garments, socks, and shoes, but may need funding to purchase all that is needed, especially new boots.*
- **Hygiene kits and personal needs** – participants will receive tooth brushes, deodorant, sanitary pads, and a wide variety of personal care items, depending on the gender of the participant. *Purchase and donations.*
- **Showers, Hair Cuts** – There are 16 permanent showers on site, and a “shower truck” can be brought in if needed. Local beauticians and barbers have donated their services to cut hair. *Shower truck will be an expense if it is needed.*
- **Medical Triage and Health Care** – Triage and basic health care will be provided by donated services from EMTs, nurses, and nursing students. *All services donated.*
- **Dental Care** – We are working to obtain donated services from local dentists. *This is an area which needs funding, as dental needs are great in this population.*
- **Emergency Shelter and Housing Placement** – The County Homeless Program, and SHELTER Inc., as well as homeless outreach workers from Central County Homeless Outreach and ANKA Behavioral Health, will be administering the VI-SPDAT homeless assessment tool to consenting Veterans to aid in their evaluation for housing and placement. Qualified Veterans will be served by SHELTER Inc. and Berkeley Food and Housing, as the local agencies which have been granted SSVF funding. *All services donated.*
- **Employment Services** – the Veterans Outreach Program officers from Workforce Services, of the County Employment Development Department, will provide employment evaluation, linkage, and services to participants seeking employment. *All services donated.*
- **Disability Services** – Independent Living Resources, Lion's Center for the Visually Impaired, and Delta Veterans Group will provide VA benefits counseling, disability counseling, information and referrals, as well as vision testing. *All services donated.*
- **Recovery Services** – Local AA and NA leaders will be leading meetings, providing peer support, and the County Behavioral Health Services team will provide counseling and placement into detox or substance abuse treatment services as requested. *All services donated.*
- **Court Services and Legal Aid** – Both Contra Costa and Alameda County judges will be present to hold “Homeless Court” to have minor legal issues resolved on the spot, with assignment for community services which, in many cases, will be able to be served at the Stand Down event. We are working to have DMV representatives at the event to take care of driver's license and other ID

issues. Bay Area Legal Aid counselors will also be present to provide advice, information and referral as needed. *All services donated.*


- **Spiritual Support** – The Contra Costa Interfaith Coalition and Multi-Faith Action Team, as well as several independent therapists, will be providing staffing 24/7 to provide spiritual support and counseling to a variety of faiths, and to persons of no faith. *All services donated.*
- **Wellness** – A variety of Wellness services are hoped to be provided, including chiropractic, massage, podiatry/foot care, and more. Practitioners in the East Bay community will donate their time to provide such services. *All services donated.*
- **Arts/Games/Entertainment/Recreation** – A wide variety of entertainment will be provided, including bands and musical groups, art therapy, roller skating for the dependents and children, a fishing field trip for 60 Veterans, books and reading, and games and activities for the children. *Materials will need to be purchased if not donated.*
- **Pets and Animal Services** – The Brentwood VFW Post is coordinating animal care and services, and is partnering with the both the Antioch and Contra Costa County Animal Shelters, as well as PetSmart for services, food, and medical assessment. *All services donated.*
- **Security** – The Knights Paladin Motorcycle Club will be providing security within the fairgrounds perimeter. Knights Paladin M/C is a Law Enforcement/Military Veterans oriented Motorcycle Club, and all male and female members are dedicated to service and are active, former, or retired Commissioned Law Enforcement Officers and Reserves (with powers of arrest) in good standing with their respective federal, state, county or municipal agencies, or active duty, retired or former military Veterans or military Reserves who served honorably. Security is also coordinated with the Antioch Police Department for outside the fairgrounds, if needed, and representatives from Antioch PD have been attending the meetings. *All services donated.*

As you can see in the attached Board of Directors list, Delta Veterans Group enjoys wide community support in the East Bay area of Contra Costa County. DVG Board members include an Antioch City Council person, a Veterans Outreach Program Specialist for the County Employment Development Department, an individual working in the legal field in the County, the Chair of the Contra Costa Homeless Advisory Board to the County Board of Supervisors, disabled Veterans, a disabled benefits counselor at Independent Living Resources, an individual who works in the prosthetics department of the Contra Costa VA, a member of a local nonprofit agency receiving SSVF services in Contra Costa, and individuals well connected in the local community.

DVG's *Stand Down on the Delta* Advisory Board members include representatives from neighboring City Councils, representatives from three of the five Board of Supervisors, Representatives from Congressman McNerney's office, and countless individuals who have participated in Stand Downs throughout the Bay Area, and who are eager to bring these much-needed services to Contra Costa veterans in their own back yard.

Thank you for your interest and support for our Veterans. Please call me at 925-222-7596 if you have any questions, or visit our website at <http://www.deltaveteransgroup.org/> to volunteer to assist with the event, or make your financial contribution to help our Veterans here in Contra Costa County.

Gratefully,



Gerald Wilson
President/CEO

