



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

Center Assists Veterans with Finances and Entrepreneurial Training—Scholarships Available



Consultants are available to meet one-on-one with clients

The Center for Women & Enterprise, which helps women and men start and run their own businesses, is offering training and technical assistance to veterans and their families, and many qualify for

scholarships.

The Center offers classes in repairing credit, debt consolidation, choosing and developing a business idea, and writing a business plan. It also offers assistance securing loans, and offers one-on-one business and legal consulting.

If you have recently returned from active duty and are looking for a way to start over, or have always thought you could succeed as an entrepreneur, this is a great way to explore that option. Classes range from one three-hour session in the evening to multi-week courses.

National Guard members, ex-Guard members and their spouses, and dependants may qualify for full scholarships through the Guard Support of Massachusetts. Other scholarships are available based on need.

For more information, call **Amy Stice** at (617) 532-0257. Classes are available in Boston, Worcester, and Providence. Full class listings are available online at www.cweonline.org, or call for a course catalog.

Save a Tree

You can help save paper and postage costs for the Network. If you would like receive a PDF version of the newsletter by e-mail rather than U.S. Mail, please e-mail dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us.

A Message from Heidi



Heidi Kruckenberg at Battleship Cove in Fall River, MA

I have been busier than ever as the women's coordinator. The women veterans all over the Commonwealth have been on my mind. I've traveled more in the past eight months on the job than I usually do in a year in an effort to meet women veterans in their communities. I've been to Attleboro, Medway, Norwood, Northampton, Fitchburg, Bedford, Fall River, Worcester, and Leicester (and more).

In November, I traveled to the tenth anniversary celebration of the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial in Washington, DC. The weekend was full of wonderful events! I wish all the women veterans in Massachusetts could have marched with me across the bridge to the ceremonial gate of Arlington Cemetery during the Candlelight March and Service of Remembrance. And just last weekend I slept overnight on the USS *Massachusetts* for the Female Faces of War Conference. The small group of women veterans from across the state had a marvelous and memorable adventure together. I hope to bring Massachusetts women veterans together at Battleship Cove again in the future. I am also working with a group of women in the western part of the state to plan a spring 2009 event in Pittsfield. Stay tuned for more details.

This is a statewide network for women veterans and I am committed to reaching out across the state to not only inform women about veterans' benefits and services, but to celebrate and honor them for their service. Please consider inviting me to your community; I'd love to come.

Heidi Kruckenberg—Women's Coordinator

VA News & Updates

VA Center for Women Veterans Hosts Summit for Women Veterans in Washington, DC



The fourth National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues will take place **June 20-22, 2008** at the Westin Washington,

DC City Center. Registration is free (limited to the first 300). The Summit promises to provide meaningful updates on issues raised at the Summit 2004 as well as address new and breaking issues. The Summit will offer a Health Expo and a Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, June 21. For more information and to register, go to www.va.gov/womenvet or call (202) 461-6193.

VA Payments and Economic Stimulus Tax Benefits

Did you receive disability compensation, pension, or survivors' benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs last year? Even if you are not otherwise required to file a tax return, you may still be entitled to an economic stimulus payment from the federal government.

You could receive a payment of \$300 for individuals or \$600 if you are married and file a joint tax return with your spouse. Eligible taxpayers who qualify for a payment may receive an additional \$300 for each qualifying child (child must be under age 17 as of December 31, 2007).

All you have to do to get the stimulus payment is file a 2007 IRS Form 1040 or Form 1040A and report at least \$3,000 in qualifying income on the form. You can include the amount of your VA benefits to qualify for the stimulus payment.

Add the amount of your VA disability compensation, pension, or survivors' benefits to any other qualifying income you have to reach the \$3,000 requirement. Other qualifying income would include wage earnings or Social Security benefits. In addition, you should write the words "Stimulus Payment" at the top of the 1040A or 1040.

In late March 2008, the IRS will mail a packet of information to recipients of VA benefits who did not file a tax return last year. The packet will contain guidance to help you claim the stimulus payment. If you need information in the interim, you can visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov.

Source: IRS publication 4664 (2-2008)

Catalog Number 5131 OP

Women Needed for Research Study

If you are a woman between the ages of 18 and 65 and you have a diagnosis of PTSD, you may be eligible to take part in a research study. The study examines the influence of personality on the expression of mental health in people who have PTSD. The study involves one session at the VA Boston Healthcare System in Jamaica Plain, MA. The session will last 2-3 hours and involves filling out questionnaires.

Study participants receive \$45 after completing the study. Call Erika at **(857) 364-4139** for more information.

Five Years of VA Health Care for Combat Veterans

WASHINGTON – Military veterans who served in combat since Nov. 11, 1998, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, are now eligible for five years of free medical care for most conditions from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This measure increases a two-year limit that has been in effect nearly a decade.

The five-year deadline has no effect upon veterans with medical conditions related to their military service. Veterans may apply at any time after their discharge for medical care for service-connected health problems.

The new provision, part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 signed by President Bush on Jan. 28, 2008, applies to VA hospital care, outpatient clinics or nursing homes. It also extends VA dental benefits — previously limited to 90 days after discharge for most veterans — to 180 days.

Combat veterans who were discharged between Nov. 11, 1998 and Jan. 16, 2003, and who never took advantage of VA's healthcare system, have until Jan. 27, 2011 to qualify for free VA health care.

The five-year window is also open to activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, if they served in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998 and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Veterans who take advantage of this five-year window to receive VA healthcare can continue to receive care after five years, although they may have to pay copayments for medical problems unrelated to their military service. Copayments range from \$8 for a 30-day supply of prescription medicine to \$1,024 for the first 90 days of inpatient care each year.

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs, News Release February 26, 2008

Third Annual Women Are Veterans Too! a Success



(l-r) Sara Payne Hayden, Elizabeth O'Doherty, Theresa O'Doherty, Mary L. Anderson, Heidi Kruckenberg

Over 100 people gathered on Beacon Hill on November 8, 2007, to honor women veterans in Nurse's Hall at the State House. The co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs (Senator Stephen Brewer and Representative Anthony Verga)

provided welcoming remarks and Secretary JudyAnn Bigby (Executive Office of Health and Human Services) and Undersecretary Coleman Nee (Department of Veterans' Services) spoke about the importance of recognizing women's service. The Outstanding Woman Veteran Award was presented to Sara Payne Hayden and Mary L. Anderson. Sisters Theresa and Elizabeth O'Doherty spoke about their service in Iraq and their readjustment returning home.

If you missed the event, or want to relive the experience, you can look at photos and listen to the keynote address at www.mass.gov/veterans. Click on "women veterans" and then "honoring women veterans."

Dial-A-Lawyer for Veterans

The Massachusetts Bar Association and U.S. Trust, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services will be offering free legal advice to veterans on **Wednesday, April 9, from 5:30-8:30 PM only**. Veterans who have legal questions involving access to benefits, family issues, employment concerns, and landlord/tenant matters can call **(617) 338-0610** for free advice between the hours of 5:30 and 8:30 only.

Brockton VA Says Good-Bye to a Gem

In August 2007, **Diane Harness-DiGloria**, Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) for over 18 years, moved south to the Orlando VA's women's health program. Diane was the heart and soul of the Women's Health Clinic in Brockton and has been sorely missed. The VA Boston Healthcare System is in the process of filling the WVPM position. The Brockton Women's Health Clinic can be reached at (774) 826-2792.

General Federation of Women's Clubs Support Veterans in Massachusetts



The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) of Massachusetts supports veterans, especially women veterans. With over 100 clubs located across the state, the GFWC is an international women's organization dedicated to community improvement

by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. Nationally the GFWC has promoted the efforts of the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial by encouraging members to register with WIMSA.

Clubs organize donation drives statewide and have collected handmade afghans in colorful patterns for the peer support Vet to Vet group at the Jamaica Plain VA. Some clubs have participated in the national Sew Much Comfort volunteer effort to provide adaptive clothing free of charge to amputees. GFWC State President, Lorraine Gorham, was at Holyoke Soldiers Home over the holidays with wrapped donations from the GFWC and she distributed them to each resident. Each year the Dennis/Yarmouth Women's Club treats the residents of the Brockton VA to a picnic at the beach. The Junior Clubs are raising funds for The Fischer House through Quarters for Quarters inviting donations to be placed into colorful houses.

For more information, please contact Karen O'Donnell, GFWC Chairman of Veterans (781) 891-1326.

E-Mail Updates

The Women Veterans' Network (WVN) will send periodic e-mail updates informing you of events and programs of interest to women veterans. If you would like to be on the e-mail distribution list, please e-mail dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us. Your e-mail address will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

Educational Stand Down for Veterans

Northern Essex Community College's Technology Center in Haverhill is hosting an Educational Stand Down for veterans on **Wednesday, April 23, 2008 at 6:00 PM**. The event is open to active duty, National Guard, Reservists, and family members of veterans. For more information call **(978) 738-7453 or (978) 372-3626**.

Massachusetts Women in Uniform

Micaila R. Britto



Micaila in boot camp

Growing up I always wanted a challenge in my life. The biggest challenge came in 1987 when I joined the United States Marine Corps at 17. I obtained the rank of Corporal. My MOS was 7011/ Aircraft Launch and Recovery – working with the arresting gear on the flight line and all the airfield lighting. During my time I was stationed on Okinawa Japan and MCAGCC 29 Palms, CA. I can honestly say that graduating boot camp was one of the proudest moments in my life. Yet after 14 years of being out of the Marines, I recently received a Letter of Appreciation from the Commanding Officer MWSS-372, which truly humbled me.

As the Eastern MA Chapter President of the Women Marines Association, I have been able to continue to be a mentor to young women who are currently on active duty. I designed a Challenge Coin—“Band of Sisters”—to represent all Marines who happen to be women. And have been helping with other veterans’ organizations in the Commonwealth and the nation. At Raytheon Company, I am still able to help give back to our servicemen and women who serve in every clime and place.

By Micaila R. Britto, Mansfield, Massachusetts



Micaila at the Marine Corps Ball, 2006

Helen McLaren



Helen in the 1940s

In December of 1942 my mother read about the Coast Guard’s interest in recruiting women to service in the SPARS. I thought it was a good idea so I enlisted in February 1943 and left Boston in the first group of 14 women the Coast Guard recruited. The Coast Guard didn’t expect the response and they were not ready, so we were sent to Hunter College in New York to train with the WAVES. After a month in New York we were sent to Ohio A&M College in Stillwater, OH. I was sent back to Boston and put in recruiting. Recruiting was a special assignment and they had no place to put me so I had special permission to live at home. I traveled the five New England states and would be away at least a month at a time, living in the New England states.

I was up for Chief when the war ended, so they froze rates, but didn’t discharge me. I then processed the young 18-year-old males who were joining the Coast Guard.

I served three years in the Coast Guard from 1943-46 and it was a wonderful experience traveling the New England states.

Thank you for thinking of me on this project. I had so many happy experiences and loved being a SPAR. Everyday was a memorable, proud moment.

By Helen McLaren, Westwood, Massachusetts



Helen wears her Coast Guard overcoat even today

A New Feature of the Women Veterans’ Network Newsletter

We’re adding a new feature to the Newsletter: the Massachusetts Women in Uniform section. This section of the newsletter will provide highlights of individual women veterans’ experiences in their own words. We encourage Massachusetts women veterans from all eras and branches of service to submit a short biography (150 words) for inclusion in a future issue of the newsletter. Please send your biography and two photos (one of you in your uniform during service and one of you currently) to dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us or call (617) 210-5781.

Brophy Selected Junior Officer of the Year



Captain Brophy smiles as she accepts the award

Captain Moria E. Brophy, a member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard 104th Medical Group was selected “Junior Officer of the Year.” Capt. Brophy coordinates and maintains the 104th Fighter Wing Immunizations Program. She develops training programs, and education for the medical staff, and manages an annual budget of \$20,000. She expertly maintains the vaccines, equipment, and emergency response supplies for approximately 1000 base personnel receiving

vaccinations annually, providing a force fit to fight. Capt. Brophy is a registered nurse in the ER at Berkshire Medical Center. She has recently returned from a tour of duty in Balad, Iraq attached to the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Squadron.

Capt. Brophy is a member of the American Legion and resides in Pittsfield, MA.

By Rosanne M. Frieri, Veterans Services Officer, Town of Pittsfield

New WVN Outreach Materials

Postcards asking “Do you know a woman veteran?” are now part of the WVN’s outreach effort to find all the women veterans in Massachusetts. If you would like some postcards to share, please call (617) 210-5781.

DO YOU KNOW A WOMAN VETERAN?



Women Veterans’ Network
Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services
600 Washington Street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02111

VA Suicide Prevention Program

Did you know that in the United States:

- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death?
- Someone dies by suicide every 16 minutes?
- Every two years more people die by suicide than died in the entire Vietnam War?
- And, in Massachusetts there are twice as many suicides as there are homicides each year?

The VA has developed a program on the national and local levels, placing a Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) at every one of its 153 medical centers. These coordinators are responsible for the suicide prevention programs at each center. This includes providing treatment, tracking, care coordination, and case management to veterans—but most of all consultation and education to all VA staff about suicide risk, prevention, and treatment. Why? Because just like the rates of fatal heart attacks decrease in communities where a larger percentage of members have training in CPR, the rates of suicide decrease in communities where a larger percentage of members have made themselves more aware of the risks and signs of suicide. Attendance and participation in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training provides that critical awareness. For more information on how to participate in training, contact your local coordinator.

There are four SPCs located at Massachusetts’ VA Medical Centers.

Boston: Meredith Powers-Lupo, LICSW (857) 364-4940 and Chris Young, LICSW (774) 826-1526

Bedford: Brenda Kline, LICSW (781) 687-2000, Ext. 5680

Northampton: Ted Olejnik, LICSW (413) 584-4040, Ext. 2112

The VA National Suicide Hotline is **1-800-273-8255 (TALK)**. Call this number, press #1, and you will be seamlessly routed to VA clinical staff 24 hours a day every day of the year. Counselors on the phone are ready to help with emotional emergencies and crises, including activating emergency services. They can also provide counseling on the phone, help with feeling safe, and access to the local SPCs.

We are here to help. If you, or if someone you care about is thinking about suicide reach out, we can help. Don’t wait, don’t hesitate, please call.

By Meredith Powers-Lupo, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, VA Boston Healthcare System

Department of Veterans' Services
Attn: Women Veterans' Network
600 Washington Street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02111

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MRC Receives Grant to Assist Iraq War Veterans

On April 1, 2006, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's (MRC) Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) was awarded a three-year federal system change grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. The grant focuses on improving access to community services and support for veterans who have sustained a traumatic brain injury and their families as the veterans return home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) has been named the "signature wound" of the War on Terror because of the large number of veterans sustaining TBIs, primarily due to the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

A 30-member consortium has been established under the grant, representing the state and community brain injury systems and veterans' healthcare and service systems. The consortium includes several veterans' organizations, an independent living center, a provider for homeless veterans, and advocacy organizations for veterans as well as family members.

A resource mapping process has been undertaken to document existing resources available to veterans with TBI and their families. Results of this process will be used

to evaluate and revise existing service delivery systems (e.g. eliminate duplication, identify gaps, and maximize resources to provide meaningful and appropriate services). Based on results of the systems review an action plan will address enhancements needed to improve systems of care.

Other objectives to be completed by March 31, 2009 are (1) the creation of a Replication Guide that can be used by other regions of the state to organize a regional Veterans with TBI Consortium, (2) a New England-wide symposium to share outcomes of the grant, and (3) a final report with recommendations to the Massachusetts Brain Injury Advisory Board (MBIAB), for amending the State Action Plan.

"This initiative will be documented and serve as a model for the rest of the state and the nation," said Debra Kamen, director of SHIP. Massachusetts is the only state awarded a federal grant that focuses only on systems of care, including community-based supports for veterans returning from the Iraq, Afghanistan, and other staging areas."

By Janet Golash-Shah, Coordinator of the Northeast Veterans with TBI Project, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission