



August 5, 2009

81ST BRIGADE RETURNS HOME

I was never more proud of the great State of Washington than last week, when I was able to see first-hand how state and federal agencies and Veterans Service Organizations have come together to welcome home our National Guard members.

On July 29 and 30 it was my privilege to visit with a group of 300 National Guard members at Fort McCoy, WI, who were on their way home from Iraq. Fort McCoy is the demobilization site for the 81st Brigade.

Our state sent a team of National Guard, WDVA, Federal VA, Employment Security and VSO staff and volunteers to Fort McCoy to help these 3,000 men and women file claims, enroll in health care and get jobs.

Read more at: www.dva.wa.gov under the In the News section.

VETERANS CONSERVATION CORPS RECEIVES TWO AMERICORPS GRANTS

WDVA was awarded \$252,000 from the Washington Commission for National and Community Service to implement a new AmeriCorps program. The Veterans Corps will engage twenty-seven 'VetCorps' members in a one-year pilot program serving veterans, soldiers and their families,

The VetCorps will tap the knowledge, skills and abilities of veterans by engaging them in AmeriCorps national service positions which will enable them to make a positive difference in their community and improve their quality of life as a civilian. Examples of service assignments include working with soldiers recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries by engaging them in volunteer opportunities to utilize service to others as an aid in recovery. VetCorps members will also partner with soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion by promoting community-based activities to meet the needs of military families while a family member is deployed.

A second grant will fund ten Veteran Navigators, who will be assigned to local colleges and universities. These Navigators will help the schools organize veterans clubs and engage students in local service projects.

If you'd like to get involved contact Mark Fischer at markf@dva.wa.gov or 360-725-2224.

STATE VETERANS CEMETERY – MEDICAL LAKE

I am excited to share that the Federal VA State Cemetery Grants Program announced final approval of the \$8.8 million grant to build Washington's first State Veterans Cemetery.

The construction project is expected to bring over 100 jobs to the area and the cemetery will employ a team of eight staff once fully operational.

Pre-construction meetings are already taking place with the Spokane-based firm, Bouten Construction Company, that was selected as the general contractor for the project.

A ceremony is planned for September 2, 2009, at the Spokane Regional Business Center when officials from the Federal VA State Cemetery Grant Program will be on-site to formally present the check.

Visit the Veterans Cemetery web site to find out more: www.dva.wa.gov/eastern_wa_vet_cemetery.html

INCARCERATED VETERANS PROGRAMS

Our Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Program is now operating in four counties under the direction of Garry Hodgson, the IVRS Program Manager.

King, Pierce, Clark and Thurston Counties all have active programs and are helping veterans get the tools and support they need to overcome the issues that led to their incarceration, and get their lives back on track.

Counties are interested in the program not only for the benefit to veterans, but for the benefit to their already stretched budgets. When they pay for fewer days in jail, and help offenders from re-offending, they save money.

Veterans participating in the program have an average recidivism rate (return to jail) of 16% compared to 42% for the general jail populations.

Read more at: www.dva.wa.gov under the In the News section.