



Building 9 Update

July 2008

Providing Help to Homeless Veterans is a cornerstone of the WDVA Vision Statement. Since November 2007, help has come in the form of Transitional Housing through the Building 9 for Veterans Transitional Housing Program. Located on the campus of the Washington Veterans Home, Retsil, Building 9 will serve up to forty veterans who need help getting back on their feet.

A key factor for success in this program is the ability to feel safe enough to think about the future. The chaos of homelessness brings one crisis after another, from finding a place to sleep to locating the next meal. Once the chaos stops, veterans have the chance to think beyond today or tomorrow and truly plan for positive changes.

The planning process begins with individual case management, on-site chemical dependency services, and on-site mental health services. Veterans also have access to an on-site job center and transportation to and from appointments, interviews or training. As of July 2008, twenty-five veterans are participating in the Building 9 Program, including four women.

Veterans who are participating in the Building 9 for Veterans Program and veterans and families in the surrounding Port Orchard Community are already seeing the benefits Building 9 brings to their community.

Here are a few highlights:

Building 9 Transitional Housing Program:

In April 2008, a newly homeless veteran moved into Building 9. His main issues were a lack of any income, the need for stable housing and assistance with employment. Through our partnership with WorkSource Bremerton, the veteran was quickly interviewed and placed in a job with the Manchester Fuel Depot. He is now earning steady income and after saving several more paychecks will be able to move into the Port Orchard community in his own apartment.

Three veterans have successfully obtained employment and housing in the community. By participating in the Building 9 Program, these veterans were able to access the services they needed to be successful on their own.

For a veteran who is unable to work, a volunteer opportunity was identified within the Building 9 Service Center. This veteran will soon be living on his own using a HUD Section 8 Voucher specifically designated for homeless veterans, but plans to continue his volunteer work at Building 9.

Two veterans are currently in school; one at Olympic College taking computer training using a Labor and Industries program and one at massage school. Another veteran is considering enrolling in the Veterans Conservation



Corps Academy at Olympic College and several are considering other training and education programs.

Building 9 Service Center:

Within a month of Building 9 accepting the first resident, it became clear that additional Service Officer assistance would be needed. Many veterans entering Building 9 are not fully connected with their Federal VA benefits and need help filing claims, accessing vocational rehabilitation training, and even applying for medical and mental health care. WDVA began working with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion to set up a Veterans Service Center in Building 9. This Service Center runs on a model of Service First and allows veterans to receive claims assistance from any service officer, even if they are not the service officer who took the original claim. This level of cooperation between the VFW, American Legion and WDVA is providing positive outcomes for the veterans of Building 9 and also for veterans and families living in the Port Orchard community who need claims assistance. The Building 9 Service center is a one-stop location to apply for and receive information about VA Compensation, VA Pension, Survivor Benefits, and State Veterans Benefits. Homeless veterans receive expedited claims assistance through a Building 9 partnership with the federal VA. For veterans benefits assistance at Building 9, please call (360) 895-4346.

A strong working relationship between the Building 9 Service Center and employees at VA Regional Office means that information can be shared between the two offices and claims are processed expeditiously. Recently, a WWII veteran's daughter came into the Service Center needing help. Her father, who is blind, and her mother were in medically compromised states and were being forced to liquidate their life savings to pay for assisted living costs. The veteran's claim for aid and attendance was processed collaboratively with the federal VA, saving critical months off the usual processing time and he is now receiving upwards of \$1,200 per month in aid and attendance payments. The visit to Building 9 truly changed the life of this distinguished WWII Veteran and his wife.

In the coming weeks, an additional case manager will be hired whose focus will be running a Housing Club, Job Club at Building 9, and providing outreach to housing providers, employers, and homeless veterans in the community. In addition, staff members are actively conducting outreach through the Women's Clinics at both the VA Medical Centers and other community programs to identify more women veterans in need of help.

Building 9 has reached this level of success in only nine months because of the strong community partnerships and ongoing active participation from outside organizations and our thanks goes to these partners. For more information, or to get involved please contact: Building9@dva.wa.gov or call 1-800-562-2308.