



October 7, 2009

### **WELCOME HOME HERO EVENTS**

Over the next few weeks, communities across our state are holding events to welcome home their members of the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade. I encourage you to attend one in your area to thank these citizen soldiers for their honorable service! Find an event near you at:

[http://www.dva.wa.gov/public\\_events.html](http://www.dva.wa.gov/public_events.html)

### **PLANNING FOR THE H1N1 VIRUS**

WDVA has been taking precautionary measures and closely monitoring staff and residents since the outbreak of the H1N1 Flu Virus last spring.

We will soon send letters to families and guardians of residents in our Veterans Homes asking them to postpone their visit if they are experiencing flu symptoms, and sharing information on our preventive measures.

Each year, residents and staff in our three homes receive the seasonal flu vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control have issued guidelines for the new H1N1 vaccine and any resident or staff member who meets these requirements will also be offered the H1N1 vaccine.

It is important that each of us have an emergency plan, not only to be prepared for a flu outbreak, but any emergency event such as flooding or severe weather. Visit the Emergency Management Department website today to find out how to create your plan:

[www.emd.wa.gov](http://www.emd.wa.gov)

### **HOMELESS VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Next month I have the opportunity to participate in a Homeless Veterans Conference as a new member of the Federal VA Homeless Veterans Advisory Committee.

This committee is charged with providing advice and making recommendations on homeless veteran programs and services to Secretary Shinseki.

I am proud of the work we've done in Washington State through our Homeless Veteran Reintegration Project, Building 9 Transitional Housing Program, and partnerships with non-profit entities such as Catholic Community Services and St. Vincent de Paul. I am also hopeful that my appointment to this committee will help to further cultivate our partnership with the

Federal VA and other federal homeless service providers leading to additional funding to serve homeless veterans.

### **CAMPAIGN REACHES OUT IN NEW PLACES**

Studies conducted by the Federal VA, Naval Health Research Center and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have confirmed an increase in alcohol consumption and abuse among Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans. They also confirm that the effects of war linger long after a soldier has left the conflict and some will self medicate as they try to cope with their emotional and physical injuries.

Under a partnership with the Washington State Liquor Control Board and others, a pilot *Veterans Outreach and Information Project* is being launched in Pierce and Clark County community colleges and liquor stores.

The project coincides with the return of members of the Washington National Guard 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade from their second deployment. Washington State has deployed well over 50,000 troops from the state's military bases, Reserve Components and National Guard.

This pilot project will proactively provide information to veterans and their families at a source point for alcohol purchases as well as select community college campuses where veterans are attending in record numbers.

### **GOVERNOR'S VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

You are invited to join the VAAC for a meeting in Ellensburg on October 22. Committee meetings are held in different locations around the state to allow veterans to share their ideas and concerns. More information on the committee can be found at:

[http://www.dva.wa.gov/advisory\\_committees.html](http://www.dva.wa.gov/advisory_committees.html)

### **STATE VETERANS CEMETERY – MEDICAL LAKE**

Construction is progressing extremely well at the cemetery site. I had the opportunity to visit the grounds on October 7 and am extremely impressed with the hard work and dedication being shown by members of the construction team.

For regular construction updates visit:

[http://www.dva.wa.gov/eastern\\_wa\\_vet\\_cemetery.html](http://www.dva.wa.gov/eastern_wa_vet_cemetery.html)