



VERG Informer – March 2016

From the Chair... What do you say to a Vietnam Veteran?...
Provided by Stacey Moore **You Say, "Thank You and Welcome Home!"**



In this Issue:

- ★ From the Chair (Pg.1)
- ★ Feature Article: Women's History Month (Pg. 2)
- ★ Veteran Spotlight & Upcoming Events (Pg. 3)
- ★ Drexel House Groundbreaking Ceremony (Pg. 4)
- ★ Tools & Resources (Pg. 5)

In 2011 Congress made an attempt to right the wrong committed against the veterans of the Vietnam era. Finally acknowledging the return of our troops, March 30 was declared Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, marking the 38th anniversary of the withdrawal of U.S. combat and combat-support units from Vietnam; Washington State followed suit two years later in 2013.

Honoring past veteran's service is an inherent responsibility for all veterans. No matter the conflict, deploying to war has profound effects on the sons and daughters charged with defending America's Freedom. There is an additional effect that all too often goes on silently...it's the effect on veteran's family members. As the grand-daughter of a World War II veteran and the daughter of a Vietnam veteran, the welcome home Vietnam veterans day has special significance to Jennifer McDaniel.

In keeping with the time honored tradition of honoring those who came before, Jennifer McDaniel, Co-Chair of the Washington State Veterans Employees Resource Group (VERG), started planning a way to express thanks and to say welcome home. On Thursday, March 24, she hosted a ceremony at the VERG's monthly meeting to honor the men and women that served our country during the Vietnam War and who are currently serving the people of Washington State. Today, 31 Vietnam veterans were called by name, and 21 who were present, received a certificate and a hearty welcome home. Following the roll call, the honorees then received a standing ovation from the current VERG members.

"...Some served as ground troops in a combat capacity in country, some were a mile off shore in a Navy ship providing gunfire support, and some were Air support, while others provided the necessary support roles both in Vietnam, other nearby posts and some back in the States that are so vital during a foreign engagement. Whatever the specific method of service, all have been affected in some way by that experience."



March is National Women's History Month

“Working to Form a More Perfect Union: Honoring Women in Public Service and Government”

Provided by: Becky Boutilier

America recognizes National Women's History Month by celebrating the remarkable success of women who are Veterans. The theme for 2016 honors women who have shaped America's history and its future through their public service and government leadership.

The roots of National Women's History Month go back to March 8, 1857, when women from New York City factories staged a protest over working conditions. International Women's Day was first observed in 1909, but it was not until 1981 that Congress established National Women's History Week to be commemorated the second week of March. In 1987, Congress expanded the week to a month. Every year since, Congress has passed a resolution for Women's History Month, and the President has issued a proclamation.

The 2014 the United States Census Report listed the number of US women Veterans as 1.6 million. Stories about these women are important to the very fabric of our society. Throughout history, women have dramatically influenced public policy and contributed to building viable institutions and organizations. Women Veterans are leaders who champion basic human rights to ensure access and equal opportunity for all Americans while leading the way in establishing a stronger and more democratic country. The dedication and hard work of women Veterans has helped break down barriers, and allowed future generations of women to overcome difficulty, bias and resistance.

The skills and experiences that women gain from their military service lead to a lifetime of achievement in their both their military service and post-military employment with Washington State. Please join us in saying thank you to the women who served our country and continued their service with Washington.

Celebration events across Washington:

- Seattle/Tacoma: <http://seattle.cbslocal.com/2012/03/12/best-events-for-womens-history-month-in-seattle/>.
- Spokane: Film screening of “She's Beautiful When She's Angry” followed by a community discussion.” March 15 at 7 p.m. at the Magic Lantern, with \$8 tickets sold at the door.
- Central WA: The Women's and Gender Studies program at CWU will present a lecture by Michael Messner, Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at USC, on the lack of coverage of women's sports by sports media on April 19th at 5:30 PM in the SURC Ballroom.
- Vancouver: The 9th Annual CCHM Woman's History Month Program. March 28, 2015 Address: 1115 E. 5th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661 | Times: 2 PM- 4 PM | Admission: Tickets are \$1 |Phone:360-993-5679

More information about National Women's History Month is available at:

- <http://www.nwhp.org/womens-history-month/2016-theme/>
- <https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/womens-history-month/>

Veterans Spotlight Chief Master Sergeant Rhonda Walls

Provided By: Dominique Jinhong



Chief Walls enlisted into the Air Force in 1994; a 19 year old Lebanon Junction, Kentucky. She completed her initial training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas then completed her initial technical training as a personnelist at Keeler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

She spent the next eight years at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas followed by four more at Randolph Air Force Base. Her next assignment was a 14-month deployment to Saudi Arabia, followed by a 15-month stint in Guam. She then earned a bit of relief as her next assignment was a three year stop in Canberra, Australia. She made the most of that assignment and her leadership ability as she

was selected and complete training as a First Sergeant. Her follow-on assignment was to Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, Washington where she spent another four years. That assignment was followed by an assignment to the Joint Staff at the United States Central Command, MacDill Air force Base, Tampa, Florida.

Her exceptional performance and leadership abilities were highlighted when she was selected for promotion to Chief Master Sergeant. At just 39 years old, Chief Walls, became one of the two the youngest female Chief Master Sergeants in the Air Force. Following her promotion, she was selected to serve as in her current assignment as Squadron Superintendent of 56 Airmen and 800 civilians at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. As her assignment winds down, she has been selected for deployment to Afghanistan. She will serve as a Squadron Superintendent of the 966th Air Expeditionary Squadron. Following this deployment, she will be promoted to Group Superintendent.

She will then begin her transition from military life to civilian life. When that time comes, she is looking forward to the assistance that organizations like the Veterans Employee Resource Group provide.

Upcoming Events

- **Lunch & Learn Events:** The next event will take place on **April 18, 2016** from 11:30am to 1:00pm at the Tumwater AGO; Stay tuned for more information.
- A day of recognition: **March 30, 2016** has been set aside as a day to **Welcome home Vietnam Veterans**.
- The VERG will participate in **Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW)** in May. More information will be published in upcoming issues.
- The [Annual Seattle Hiring Expo](#) for veterans, active duty military members, guard and reserve members, and military spouses at Safeco Field on **May 25th, 2016** from 10:00am – 1:00pm.

Drexel House Groundbreaking Ceremony - March 3, 2016

Provided By: Jennifer McDaniels



On Wednesday, March 3rd a number of VERG members joined representatives from Catholic Community Services, Thurston County Commissioners, WDVA, and other community groups for the ground breaking ceremony of the newest Drexel House location on Devoe Street in Olympia.

Drexel House is run by Catholic Community Services and houses homeless men and women who are in the most vulnerable situations. The most recent addition to Drexel House properties will have a specific portion of units set aside for veterans housing. Homeless veterans account for a sizeable portion of the community's homeless population now. Drexel House and Catholic Community Services are working to try and reduce that number by including veterans in programs for reintegrating them back into the workforce.

A recent graduate of their program is also a former Army Staff Sergeant that found himself on the streets after honorable discharge. He said he did not know where to go for help and found himself falling deeper into a hole. This program saved him and now he can tell other veterans where to go if they need assistance.

VERG members' pooled personal funds to buy a \$500 fundraising brick with an inscription showing our support for our fellow veterans.

A special moment happened when the recording of our National Anthem failed to play and the VERG members immediately starting singing louder to lead the attendees in finishing the anthem.



Tools & Resources

[Click here](#) for more information on FREE Cybersecurity Training for Veterans. Hire our Heroes and the Department of Homeland Security have teamed up to bring you FREE cybersecurity training and certification prep courses. These courses will build your skills and knowledge and prepare you to compete for the top cybersecurity jobs across the country.

The Federal Virtual Training Environment (FedVTE) is an online, on-demand training center with courses ranging from beginner to advanced levels. Veterans interested in getting into the cybersecurity field can take introductory cybersecurity courses, while elite cybersecurity professionals can take their skills to the next level with advanced course curriculum. FedVTE even offers prep courses for some of the most popular certifications in the industry.

[Click here](#) to learn more about two new no-cost training programs launched by the VA. The Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) and VA Learning Hubs, help transitioning Service members and Veterans from all eras to learn skills, earn credentials and advance in civilian careers following separation from service.

[Click here](#) to read more information about HB 2040. HB 2040 is a campaign related to increasing employment for veterans. As part of these efforts, the Employment Security Division implemented the [YesVets](#) program on February 1, 2016. Employers can fill out the **YesVets** new hire form with information on their newly hired veteran and receive a decal they can display within their agency.

[Click here](#) and check out The Onward to Opportunity program. It is a no-cost career skills service that offers training and credentials to transitioning service members and active-duty spouses. Employers can also partner with this program in various ways

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[Click here](#) to see all the current open jobs listings across the state enterprise.



If you see someone wearing one of these lanyards, be sure to ask them about the VERG!

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DO YOU HAVE IDEAS OR INFORMATION TO DISSEMINATE? SUBMIT YOUR INFORMATION WITH A COMMUNICATIONS REQUEST AND THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM WILL TAKE ACTION!

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