



The Front Lines

A newsletter for donors and friends of:
The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service & Education Center, Inc.

Volume 4, Issue 1 Winter 2011

www.PhilaVets.org

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Marsha L. Four

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Chief Executive Officer's Message

Marsha Four

PVMSEC has a thirty-year history of dedicated service to military Veterans throughout the entire region. Edward Lowry, who will retire at the beginning of the New Year, moved PVMSEC from its birth to the position of respect, which it holds today. His thirty years of devoted investment set the course for our future path.

Having worked at PVMSEC for nearly fifteen years, I want to thank Ed and the Board of Directors for its support and confidence in appointing me Executive Director. I intend to continue the strong advocacy and service record of PVMSEC, working with partners from across all strata to bring help and assistance to Veterans.

I recently attended a forum in DC sponsored by the VA and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness. The increased commitment from the Secretaries of all the federal agencies, especially those of VA, HUD, and DOL, has created a renewed energy in the attack on this intolerable life situation faced by the men and women who have served our country in the military. Through creative initiatives and the meshing of resources they have begun to increase the effectiveness of federal dollars and programs that will ultimately result in a more effective outcome to ending homelessness among Veterans.

There's a long way to go. As a provider, I urge and encourage the federal agencies, in the process of this increased attention to the issue, to have ongoing, open and frank dialog with providers who work on behalf of homeless Veterans.



A Tribute to Edward J. Lowry



Edward "Ed" J. Lowry, retired last year as Executive Director of The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service & Education Center, the agency he founded and fostered with attention and love for thirty years. As a Veteran, his life was dedicated to those who served this country in uniform.

Ed's energy and foresight took "The Center" from its beginnings with the United Veterans Council and expanded it to that of a widely respected 501(c) (3) nonprofit. His spirit and drive created the agency from the ashes of the recognized and unacceptable statistics of Veteran unemployment in the late 1970s. His creativity and fortitude delivered it through its "darkest days" of funding availability to solidify its highly respected position as The Service Resource Center for Veterans for this entire region.

Ed commanded a staff that worked tirelessly under his leadership to bring enhanced services and assistance to our Veterans. Thousands of Veterans know his name. He is the man that brought them truth, hope, and another chance at a successful life. He gave them answers...he gave them renewed belief in themselves...and he gave them dignity.

Ed is the embodiment of complete and total dedication and commitment to a cause of which heroes are made. The staff at The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service & Education Center wish Ed a long, leisurely and healthy retirement!

“With a Little Help From Our Friends”

PVMSEC would like to thank the many organizations and individuals that have supported our work with Veterans this past fiscal year:

WMGK 102.9FM - John DeBella and the staff at WMGK have been wonderful supporters over the years with the Annual John DeBella Veterans RadioThon. We would like to thank everyone from WMGK for their hard work and commitment. Over a four-year period the John DeBella Veterans RadioThon has raised over \$300,000 for Veterans in need.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Charitable Service Trust - PVMSEC was awarded a \$50,000 grant to provide meals, transportation to and from the Philadelphia VA Hospital, and clothing items to the homeless and disabled Veterans of PVMSEC.

Peirce College - On September 18, 2010, Peirce College donated 40 flat-screen monitors, 40 HP desktop PCs and various IT equipment to enhance PVMSEC's classroom infrastructure, as well as donating ongoing IT support to our agency. We would like to thank: Peirce College President James Mergiotti; Program Manager of Institutional Partnerships, Steve Byrd; Chief Information Officer, Christopher Duffy; IT Service Center Manager, Barron Felder; System Support Technician, Brian Gerard; and the rest of the staff for their hard work in making this donation possible.

Sugar House Casino - Even before the Sugar House opened to the public, they were committed to PVMSEC and the services we provide to Veterans. In a few short months that have donated over \$20,000 to support our important programs and services to Veterans in need.

Helen Bader Foundation - Awarded a \$15,000 grant to support a pilot program to assist women Veterans in a healthy and successful transition from military to civilian life.

The Doo Wop Festival Sponsors, Supporters and Patrons - Particularly our Gold Sponsors - State Senator Christine Tartaglione and The Military Order of the Purple Heart; Silver Sponsors - Ironworkers' Local Union No. 401, Plumbers Local 690, Sheet Metal Workers #19; Bronze Sponsor's - AFSCME District Council #47, The Selzer Company.

Fannie Mae Foundation - Awarded a \$7,500 grant to support PVMSEC's homeless day service center, The Perimeter, and The Mary E. Walker House and LZII transitional housing facilities in Coatesville, PA.

Hoxie Harrison Smith Foundation - Awarded a \$4,500 grant to pay for mattresses/box springs and other essential furniture for needy Veterans that PVMSEC places into our permanent housing programs, and or/ help with rental assistance.

Laura and Jon Faller - Committed supporters, who were responsible for introducing Peirce College to our organization. We cannot thank them enough for their ongoing support of PVMSEC.

Fannie Mae - We are so thankful for the staff at Fannie Mae for their help in donating the auction gift baskets and managing The Doo Wop Festival's auction tent. They also painted the first floor of our downtown office in November.

Purple Heart Chapter 63 - Provides nourishing food on a weekly basis to the Veterans in our homeless programs.

Daughters of the American Revolution: The Great Valley Chapter - Provide and serve home-cooked meals to the women Veterans at The Mary E. Walker House, and various financial contributions.

Kings Road Consulting - Thanks to William Hawkins, Principal and Owner, for his expertise on many of PVMSEC's communication pieces, including this newsletter and bringing media and community attention to the work we do with Veterans.

Did you know?

There are 964,132 Veterans living in Pennsylvania; 63,603 of those are Women Veterans.

Finding My Way

An interview with Carlton Leeks

“I was in the Air Force for 9 years, 2 months and 16 days. Some dates you just know, you know?”

“For instance, 8/24/1990 was the date I was honorably discharged; 6/6/1981 was the date I enlisted. After I got out of the military I had a good paying job—I worked in aircraft maintenance. I also did hydraulic repairs for diesel engines.”

Everything was going well for Carlton until 2008.

“In February 2008 my father passed away. He was my best friend; he was everything to me. I was basically lost and had lost all hope. I buried my Father and I just stopped. I was never in the system before, never on welfare, and I never asked anybody for anything. I was too proud to. That’s how I became homeless. My father took his last breath, and so did I.

“While homeless, I was staying at Sunday Breakfast at 13th and Spruce Streets in Philadelphia. I got to know about PVMSEC just by word of mouth. They said a van comes by in the morning and takes us to the Perimeter. I said what’s the “Perimeter” and where is that? They said it’s for Vets!

“It all started with The Perimeter Program, having a place to take a shower and wash my clothes and receive some food.”



Employment and Training

“I took the applications class (at PVMSEC). It made me computer literate—I didn’t know anything about PowerPoint; I had heard about the Internet but I wasn’t doing anything with it.

They teach you basic typing skills. I was a one-finger wonder before I took the class. When the class was going on, people came and told us about the different services available to Veterans. That is how I found out about the Upward Bound program (at the University of Pennsylvania). I did Veterans Upward Bound for a semester.

Immediately after I graduated from Upward Bound I started (PVMSEC’s) A+ preparation (computer repair) class. With help from PVMSEC I found a job in June 2009 as a maintenance man at The Parker Spruce Hotel. I was so grateful just to have a job. I have been there for about a year and a half and have since been promoted to building manager.”

Housing

PVMSEC helped Carlton get out of homelessness with our Rapid Re-housing program “Now I have an apartment in East Oak Lane, a beautiful place.” PVMSEC purchased furniture for Carlton, too. “They gave me a love seat, entertainment center, dresser, a refrigerator, a great refrigerator, actually!

“It has been a whole team effort. Good things began to happen to me when I came here. I lost my way and the PVMSEC pointed me in the right direction.”

Broadening Our Services

This past year PVMSEC has explored new funding opportunities and has received various support to bring new important programs and services to our area’s Veterans.

Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program - PVMSEC

was awarded a second grant from the Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing to provide permanent housing to 43 individual Veterans and 10 Veteran families in the amount \$335,885. PVMSEC has successfully placed 172 homeless Veterans into permanent housing, provided furniture to 60 Veterans, utility assistance to 157 Veterans, and moving assistance to 103 Veterans during the last fiscal year.

Incarcerated Veterans Training Program (IVTP) -

Funded from the US Department of Labor, this program provides assistance reintegrating incarcerated and/or transitioning incarcerated Veterans, who are at risk of becoming homeless, for 120 Veterans. In the first couple of months administering IVTP, PVMSEC has trained 35 Veterans and placed 14 in employment.

Women’s Homeless Veteran Reintegration Project (W-HVRP)

- Funded by the US Department of Labor, this is the first grant of its kind to provide skills training and employment to a specific homeless women Veteran cohort. Training is currently being conducted at PVMSEC’s Transitional Housing Residence, The Mary E. Walker House. A total of 24 women Veterans will receive skills training in Green Business Solutions and 22 women Veterans will obtain employment.

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"Proudly Serving Veterans Since 1980"

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Our Mission: To provide coordinated and comprehensive services to military Veterans, by eliminating barriers for successful transition and addressing needs for independent reintegration into their community.

Services / Programs

We provide a variety of free services to honorably discharged veterans in the tri-state area including:

- Employment and Training
- Services to Homeless Veterans
- Transitional / Permanent Housing
- Referral Services

Philadelphia Army National Guard Single Mother Receives New Car Donation

On Monday, November 22, 2010, Camille Cottrell, a member of the Army National Guard and a client of PVMSEC, received the keys to a completely refurbished Nissan Murano...wrapped in a giant bow.

Allstate Insurance Company and Sterling Autobody Centers teamed up with The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service & Education Center to donate the car, which is part of the National Recycled Rides program.

"The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service & Education Center and its staff are honored to be a part of such a wonderful occasion for Camille. We could not think of anyone more deserving than Camille, a young single mother who is raising her two children while still serving our country in the National Guard. She has exhibited such strength and character in moving forward and taking sole responsibility for her family," said Marsha Four, PVMSEC Executive Director.

Here is an excerpt from a letter from Camille to the PVMSEC, Sterling and Allstate following the presentation...



Thank you for allowing me to participate in your awesome program. Life was a struggle for me because of a lack of transportation. Without a car I was not able to go look for a job, take my daughter to school, go grocery shopping, or do laundry in a timely manner because I was depending upon public transportation. I tried to further my education but could not because of the inconvenience of public transportation in the city.

I am very grateful to be a recipient of this program and I hope this program continue to change lives through donations in the future. On behalf of my family, the Cottrell's, we wish you all and your families a blessed holiday season and Happy New Year! We hope your lives are as blessed as you have made ours! - SPC. Camille Cottrell

PVMSEC has recently helped Camille move into an apartment with our Rapid Rehousing program and PVMSEC continues to work with her to secure employment. We wish Camille the best of luck in her future endeavors!