

VA & R Commission

Chairman Joseph Gladden (MD) opened the meeting at 9:50 AM on May 5, 2007.

Members present: Chairman Joseph Gladden (MD), Ronnie Grist (GA), Dave Mennel (MI), Michael Gray (MD), Mark A. Tansel (IN), Thomas Kurk (NY).

Guests present: National Commander Earl Ruttkofsky, Leading National Commander Candidate Ray Giehll, Jr., National Asst. Adjutant Robert Avery, Ken Jenkins (MD), Steve Pintarich (CT), Ken Holloway (WA), John Bogart (NY), Frank Jiosi, Jr. (NJ), Mike Wisner (OH), Bill Lewis (OR), Larry Vincent (AL), Kevin Ivery (PA), Kerwin Douthit (SD), Rob Perkins (CA), Tom Cisna (IL), Mike Moss (CO), Stephen Bogan (PA), Ken Wedenski (CO), Ronald Wyatt (MI), Dennis Theobald (IA), Dave Russell (WA), Kevin Collier (AK).

Chairman Gladden reminded the members that this year's goal is to receive 750 reports. We need to get the word back to the various Detachments to promote reporting this year. Chairman Gladden noted we are no longer involved in supporting the Soldiers to Soldiers program, and that a donation to the Creative Arts Festival is now in the budget.

A motion made by Mark Tansel (IN) and seconded by Michael Gray (MD) to support Resolution NEC 7-S07 (Creative Arts Festival Donation of \$5,000) was carried.

The Commission reviewed their budget for 2007-2008. Members were reminded to submit receipts under communications for their expenses. No changes were requested for 2007-2008.

Ronnie Grist (GA) spoke on the Hometown to Heroes program. There is a kit available on line at The American Legion website. The program includes welcome home celebrations, temporary financial aid, counseling, home repairs, financial counseling, and support with obtaining government assistance. Posts and Squadrons are urged to support the program, which is primarily for injured and disabled veterans and is a transitional assistance program for our troops as they return. The Family Support Network helps the families that are left at home while their family service member is away. There is plenty of information available on line for this program also.

Commander Earl Ruttkofsky spoke about support being provided in Michigan for the Heroes to Hometown program working in conjunction with the Fisher House. Chairman Gladden urged the members to get information on these programs out to the Detachments.

Michael Gray (MD) spoke on recent VA Health care system changes in regards to volunteering. Training in food preparation is now required when providing meals to the veterans and certain foods such as egg based products are not allowed. Certification in food preparation is required. If you are planning an activity you need to check with the hospital to obtain any special dietary needs of the patients. Your VA Representative needs to be contacted for more information on training. If you already have certification for food preparation from your local County or State Health Department you will likely be covered under the new VA requirements. Information is available at your local VA center. In October of 2008 these regulations are up for review.

Thomas Kurk (NY) spoke on the Fisher House Foundation. In New York, the VA Commission will be expanded to six members next year and a Walk-a-Thon to raise \$100,000 in the Spring of 2008 is in the planning stages with the proceeds to be divided amongst the VA facilities, NY Veterans Homes and the Albany Fisher House. During their Mid Winter Meeting in Albany, a tour of the Fisher House was conducted and guests included PNC William Sparwasser and Chairman Joseph Gladden. Tom Cisna (IL) noted that Illinois is now constructing its very first Fisher House. A Fisher house DVD was shown.

It was noted that a Fisher House will be soon built in Philadelphia and also in Michigan. The Detachments are working on fund raising efforts for these new facilities. Chairman Gladden will provide copies of the DVD for those interested. It was noted that you can call 888-294-8560 for Fisher House promotional material. Mike Moss (CO) is the President of the Board of Directors for the Colorado Fisher House and noted the Detachment of Colorado has donated \$10,000 this year. Checks should be made payable to your local Fisher House. There are 37 Fisher house in all. Thomas Kurk provided some particulars on the homes. Over 110,000 families have made use of the various facilities since its inception.

A motion made by Tom Kurk (NY) and seconded by Ronnie Grist (GA) to support Resolution NEC 5-S07 (Fisher House Donation of \$10,000) was carried.

Mark Tansel (IN) spoke on communications from National down to the Detachments and then on to the Squadrons. A letter has been prepared to use as guide which was distributed to the members. It will be posted on the website shortly.

Dave Mennel (MI) spoke on the new Consolidated Squadron Report. The form is very easy to complete. Additional information can also be submitted with the report such as a narrative or newspaper article. The Detachments are encouraged to promote use of the form. Chairman Gladden noted that the National Adjutant will be entering the data and forwarding a spreadsheet to him that can be used for judging the National awards. Discussion continued on the new CSR.

A motion made by Dave Mennel (MI) and seconded by Tom Kurk (NY) to support Resolution NEC 10-S07 (World Team Sports Donation of \$5,000) was carried. The resolution will help fund a bike ride from Gettysburg, PA to Washington, DC to promote VA Awareness.

Mike Adreon (MO), member of the Legislative Commission spoke on a few legislative priority items of interest to the VA & R Commission, including mandatory VA funding. Mike answered several questions regarding the legislative priorities. Members are urged to sign up on the National Legislative e-group for the latest news on legislative items of concern.

Ronnie Grist (GA) talked about this years Washington Conference attended by the Vice Chairman and also Chairman Gladden. There were two VA & R meetings this year at the Washington Conference. The morning session was even televised on CSPAN. Chairman Gladden spoke about the major issue being lack of funding for our veterans. Discussion continued on veterans funding.

John Bogart (NY) spoke on a chain of command for information going down the line through from Detachment, Districts, Counties and then on to the Squadrons. This is being put to use in New York.

Thomas Kurk (NY) noted that he recently had to place his dad in a Nursing Home and it was required that he turn in his dad's military life insurance policy. Chairman Gladden indicated that this issue could possibly be handled by a resolution and more information should be obtained.

There being no further business to come before the Meeting it was adjourned at 11:08 AM.