

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to inquire and secure the benefits they have earned is by visiting their local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org or at www.calvet.ca.gov/resources/database.aspx.

JANUARY 2013



RECRUITMENT JOB FAIRS AT FRESNO, REDDING VET HOMES

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) will hold recruitment Job Fairs in Redding and Fresno to fill hundreds of positions at the new Veterans Homes of California in those cities.

Fresno Job Fair - January 23, 2013

Veterans Homes of California - Fresno
 2811 West California Avenue
 Fresno, CA 93706

Redding Job Fair - January 30, 2013

Veterans Homes of California -
 Redding
 3400 Knighton Rd
 Redding, CA 96002

The Job Fairs will begin at 8 a.m. and continue to 4 p.m. to give as many interested people as possible the

chance to participate. At the Job Fairs, CalVet will provide workshops on how to get a state job and give instruction on navigating the State of California Job site and the application and hiring processes. Computer kiosks will be available so prospective employees can complete a state application online. CalVet Human Resources staff will be available to assist job applicants.

To open the Homes, CalVet must fill positions in nursing, medicine, pharmacy, mental health, social services, speech and physical therapy, dietetics and food service, sanitation and janitorial, plant operations, grounds keeping,

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CALVET AGAIN SECURES AA-BOND RATING

Fitch, a global rating agency, has again given the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) an AA- bond rating. According to Fitch, 'AA' ratings denote expectations of very low default risk, very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments, and insignificant vulnerability to foreseeable events. CalVet is one of very few State agencies that can claim this high rating.

CalVet's AA- rating is based on approximately \$758 million in State of California General Obligation Veterans Bonds and approximately

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COMPLEMENTARY & ALTERNATIVE MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENTS FOR VETERANS

The importance of mental health is now common knowledge. Millions of Americans not only suffer ailments such as depression and anxiety disorders (including generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] and social phobia), but often more than one condition may be present. For example, it is estimated that nearly half of all those diagnosed with depression also suffer from an anxiety disorder.

Recognizing the severity of this problem and the limitations of traditional medicine, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) is currently researching complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) modalities for treating mental health issues in veterans. Two forms of CAM that have been made available to San Bernardino County veterans are the Trauma and Community Resiliency Models, biologically-based mental health interventions pioneered by the Trauma Resource Institute; and equine-assisted therapy through the Equus Medendi program.



TRAUMA AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCY MODELS

“We believe it doesn’t need to be an ordeal to heal.” When Trauma Resource Institute (TRI) Director Elaine Miller-Karas spoke these words at a presentation to the San Bernardino County Department of Veteran Affairs, County USDVA Director Bill Moseley took note. Since then, TRI and the County USDVA have partnered to bring the Trauma Resiliency Model and the Community Resiliency Model (TRM and CRM) to individuals working with veterans, active duty service members, and their families in San Bernardino County. TRM and CRM are biological interventions that help regulate the nervous system. TRM involves trauma reprocessing and is geared towards professionals. CRM is a set of wellness skills for community members.

Funded through California’s Mental Health Services Act and launched in December 2010, CRM is an innovative skills-based, peer-to-peer intervention that anyone can use for their own benefit and for the benefit of their community. This simple wellness practice can be taught to anyone regardless of culture or faith, and, once the skills are learned, they can be passed on to family, friends and community members. Viewing symptoms through a biological perspective, CRM employs a skill set to return the body’s nervous system to its natural balance. CRM helps individuals understand their nervous systems and track sensations related to resiliency. The nervous system begins

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to return to its normal balance or rhythm (referred to as the “Resilient Zone”) as the individual practices CRM skills.

TRI provides community-oriented educational materials about human biology and how it responds to traumatic events. The goal is to make these skills a part of healing in daily life, to increase the sense of one’s ability to help himself or herself by bringing the body, mind and spirit into greater balance through improved resilience. Veterans, active duty service members, and their families are encouraged to pass the skills along to friends and loved ones, thus building a more resilient community.

Working in conjunction with San Bernardino County Behavioral Health Departments and the Department of Veterans Affairs of San Bernardino County, TRI has taught CRM skills to more than 50 veterans, active duty

military and their family members since February 2012.

At a community conference in June 2012, veterans and family members enthusiastically discussed their new roles as CRM trainers and ambassadors. The stories of hope and resiliency were overwhelmingly touching; at times you could hear a pin drop as veteran after veteran recounted how learning to stabilize their nervous systems had brought about pronounced positive changes in their activities of daily living.

...this is the first time in 40 years that I understand my symptoms and I learned this in two days. -Vietnam Vet

...learning about the freeze response is the first time that I have been able to understand the feeling of time slowing down. -Gulf War Vet

I’m kind of a hothead, and these skills helped me when I was disappointed about not having dinner with my grandson. I was able

to have a good conversation with my son and daughter...my former pattern was to just “blow up.” -Vietnam Vet

TRM and CRM skills have been taught and used in China, Rwanda, Kenya, Haiti and Japan. TRM has also been taught and used here at home in the aftermaths of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and Southern California firestorms. In addition to support from the World Health Organization, San Bernardino County, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Bethesda Naval Center, Sierra Tucson Treatment Center, and Canyon Rehab, the U.S. Department of Defense named TRM a “promising practice” in a white paper to Congress in March, 2011.

After years of working with veterans, many of whom seem to be re-traumatized by the very treatments intended to help them recover, it has been a privilege to introduce people to TRI’s CRM training, which can be used by almost anyone to alleviate their PTSD symptoms.

I wholeheartedly agree with Elaine Miller-Karas’ comment that “it doesn’t need to be an ordeal to heal.” Upon hearing this, I knew she was on to something very powerful that could make a great difference in the lives of our veterans and their families.

*-Bill Moseley,
Director of Veterans Affairs*



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EQUUS MEDENDI

"There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." These famous words by Winston Churchill are the premise for Equus Medendi (Latin for "healing horse"), Equine Assisted Learning and Therapy. Anyone who has had the opportunity to get to know these incredible animals would most certainly concur.

Equine Assisted Learning and Therapy is an alternative and short-term treatment approach that addresses a variety of mental health and human growth challenges including PTSD, depression, anxiety and relationship issues.

The unique nature of horses, their powerful size combined with their inability to judge or deceive, is what makes the therapy so successful. Working alongside a horse (in spite of fears related to their intimidating size and power) helps participants develop greater self-confidence and provides great insight when dealing with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.

Horses are dynamic, powerful, curious, social and highly sensitive living beings. These characteristics help build a compelling connection between horse and veteran as they build trust with one another through various ground exercises (horseback riding is not involved). This quite often provides participants with a feeling of comfort, breaking



down barriers and allowing them to address the psychological challenges they face.

As we know, many veterans deal with a variety of social, physical, and mental health issues and providing a therapeutic experience at a ranch, as opposed to the traditional in-office setting, has proven very effective at helping them come to terms with their individual situations. With the support of the San Bernardino County Department of Veterans Affairs, Equus Medendi has been able to provide this program to over 100 veterans and their families.

"This is the only place where I feel calm and collected. I'm actually at peace with myself and the world."

- Marty T., Vietnam Vet

"For me, the program was almost beyond description. I was skeptical when I first read about it. I've learned that you have to have trust, you have to have patience. My problems nowadays,

I can't throw a grenade at them. In the six weeks of the program, I feel like a completely different person. This has been absolutely the best thing I've experienced with regards to my PTSD."

-Steven S., OIF/OEF Vet

"Every veteran should have access to this program- it's that good!"

-Loree K. Sutton, MD, Brigadier General, US Army (Ret.). Army Psychiatrist and founding Director of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health.

"Veterans shared with me that the relationship that developed with the horses has been life-changing and for many, the only intervention that has reduced their PTSD Symptoms."

-Elaine Miller-Karas

Trauma Resource Institute Co-Founder

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MOVING FORWARD

Unfortunately, war and war wounds have been around as long as humans have had irreconcilable differences, and they will most likely be with us for quite some time to come.

Having found traditional medical practices insufficient to heal non-physical wounds has spurred the development and analysis of many different innovative and

helpful treatment options for those suffering mental illness; among them biologically-based mental health and equine-assisted therapies.

By being open-minded and willing to promote complementary and alternative treatments, we will further advance our ability to help heal those who have suffered as a result of serving our country.

For more information about these programs, contact:

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USDVA BRIEFS

VETERANS CRISIS LINE WORKS TO KEEP VETS AND TROOPS ALIVE

The Veterans Crisis Line offers free, confidential support for Veterans and family members in crisis. Learn how the call center works day and night to connect Vets with support and resources by visiting <http://n.pr/TKqR3c>

LAUNCHES CHALLENGE.GOV CONTEST FOR SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS

The Department of Veterans Affairs is challenging software developers to create new systems that schedule appointments in VA's nationwide health system. <http://1.usa.gov/Slymx0>

VA WORKING TOGETHER TO DETERMINE GRADUATION RATES

VA teamed up with Student Veterans of America and the National Student Clearinghouse to better track how student Veterans are performing. <http://1.usa.gov/10iRYFu>

VA AND ANCESTRY.COM PARTNER TO INDEX HISTORIC BURIAL RECORDS

The Department of Veterans Affairs has partnered with the internet-based genealogy research firm Ancestry.com to bring burial records from historic national cemetery ledgers into the digital age. The effort will make the collection—predominantly of Civil War interments—accessible to researchers and Ancestry.com subscribers undertaking historical and genealogical research. <http://1.usa.gov/W0DPrYVA>

VA ANNOUNCES NEW ONLINE RESOURCES FOR FUNERAL DIRECTORS

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today the availability of the new online funeral directors resource kit. Funeral directors nationwide may use the kit when helping Veterans and their families make burial arrangements in VA national cemeteries. <http://1.usa.gov/XEcrPz>