

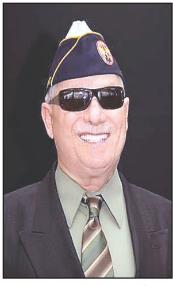
# VETERANS CHRONICLE



FRIDAY, February 15, 2019

# Blinded veteran sees the way to help others with vision needs

By Robert (Dale) Stamper



Thave been a member of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) since 1968. I lost my sight due to injuries sustained when wounded on Jan. 6, 1968, in Vietnam. I have been actively involved with veterans, especially blinded veterans, for the past 20 years.

I have served as chaplain and chapter commander of DAV Fort Sherman 9. I have been on the BVA National Board of Directors since 2007, and served as director of District 4, an area that covered 11 Western states. I was elected national secretary in 2011. I am finishing up my time on the board as the immediate past president.

In 1968, shortly after losing my sight, I attended the VA Western Blind Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto, Calif. where I gained the skills I needed to adjust to being blind. The blind rehab services provided by the VA are very good.

I am concerned that many blinded veterans are not

aware of the programs. All visually impaired veterans honorably discharged are eligible for services, which includes low vision. Loss of sight does not have to be service-connected; many veterans receive blind rehab services as a result of macular degeneration, glaucoma and other conditions.

The point of contact is the Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) coordinator. VIST coordinators are located at most VA medical centers across the nation.

If you know a veteran in the Spokane area that you believe would benefit from these services, contact VIST coordinator Suzanne Bennatt at (509) 434-7670 or visit Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center.



VeteransHelpNet is a volunteer veteran support organization founded to serve veterans in Eastern Washington and North Idaho. It was conceived by a small group that believes a lot of veterans are not aware of the benefits and assistance available to them. The group came up with an awareness marketing idea that is centered around two focused messages:

## 1. Hey, Vets! "Did You Know?" –

Informational briefs sharing details about little-known or forgotten benefits that are available to veterans or their families.

2. Veteran Stories – Articles about veterans who have received help or care through a benefit for themselves or family members. These stories celebrate the successes of veterans while also increasing awareness about the opportunities and resources available.

With these two focused messages, VeteransHelpNet intends to give hope and help to many veterans who have earned these benefits through their service.

To submit useful "Did You Know" facts and veteran stories, visit www. Veterans HelpNet. com. For more information, contact (509) 655-9266 or info@ Veterans HelpNet.com.

#### HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

# Tinnitus is one of the most common disabilities among veterans?

If you have ringing in your ears (tinnitus) and/or hearing loss that developed due to military service, you may be eligible for VA health care benefits and a monthly disability check. Contact a Veterans Service officer for more information. This is a free service and you do not need to belong to a specific organization to receive help.

VETERANS CHRONICLE is published in *The Spokesman-Review* on the third Friday of every month to highlight the success stories, benefits and resources available for local veterans.

If you would like to share a veteran story or a "Did You Know" fact, contact info@VeteransHelpNet.com. For advertising information, contact (509) 459-5095 or advertising@spokesman.com.

# WorkSource helps veteran find career path



B ob had a difficult time deciding what to do after his release from the Army. Injuries prevented him from pursuing a career using his existing welding and fabrication skills. He tried and changed his mind several times with various training programs, including Ultrasound Sonography and Aircraft Mechanic, but continued to struggle with job performance due to past injury.

Each new field he tried put him in danger of exhausting his VA education benefits without a new career to show for it.

WorkSource helped Bob assess his skills, abilities and limitations to determine which occupations would be a good fit. His unique skills in fabrication and eye for detail made him a promising candidate for the Orthotics and Prosthetics program at Spokane Falls Community College.

Job opportunities in this field are rare in Spokane, but Bob's

willingness to relocate and his aptitude for the subject made it a great fit.

Two years later, Bob returned to WorkSource for help finding a practicum required for graduation. A team effort resulted in a virtual interview with a hospital in Michigan, Bob's home state. They were so impressed that they offered him a paid practicum while he finished his certification, a promise of full-time employment after certification, and relocation cost reimbursement.

We are proud to have been able to support this honorable veteran in achieving a sustainable and long-term career solution.

Provided by WorkSource, an equal opportunity employer/ program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities (Washington Relay 711).

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Volunteer DAV Van Drivers are needed in Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint and Spokane. If you can donate one day per week to drive disabled veterans, contact Jeannie Kyle at (509) 434-7019 for more information.



Newby-ginnings of North Idaho, Inc. provides basic necessities and essential household items to veterans, active military and their families at no cost. For volunteer opportunities, call (208) 619-6996. Hours of operation are Monday-Wednesday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. 570 Clearwater Loop, Unit A, Post Falls, Idaho.



SAVHG

The Spokane Area Veterans Honor Guard (SAVHG) supports military funeral honors throughout the greater Spokane community and is a primary fixture at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake. SAVHG conducts approximately 300 honors services annually. Volunteers to participate in military funeral honors are always needed. For additional information, contact Tom Christie Sr. at (509) 280-8162, or Tom Christie Jr. at (509) 216-7609.

#### HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

# Special assistance is available to OIF and OEF veterans?

Veterans who are Washington residents and served in Iraq or Afghanistan are eligible for a one-time emergency assistance award from Washington Department of Veteran Affairs.

Learn more at the Services

for Veterans workshop at WorkSource Spokane on the first and third Monday of every month starting in March, 9:30 a.m. at 130 S. Arthur St. Call (509) 532-3120 or visit www. worksourcespokane.com. In Idaho, contact Department of Labor Veteran Services Representatives at 600 N. Thornton St., Post Falls or (208) 457-8789.

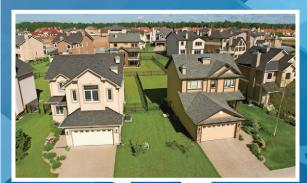


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## Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center

pokane County Regional Veterans Services provides emergency financial services to indigent veterans, widows and their families. Funding for these programs is mandated by law and comes from county property tax revenues.



**Emergency relief assistance** is provided in voucher form to a specific vendor for the following emergency related needs: food and hygiene, rent (facing eviction), burial assistance, work clothing (limited availability), transportation, utilities (facing shut-off), training assistance and barriers to

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of Veteran Affairs (WDVA), there are three **Veteran Service Officers** (VSOs) and staff available to help you enroll in the VA system, answer questions, file claims and sign up for veteran services and benefits. Service officers are knowledgeable and skilled in forming comprehensive and lasting solutions for

Spokane County Regional Veterans Service Center and the WDVA recently moved to a new facility at 1117 N. Evergreen Road, open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (closed for lunch, 12-1 p.m.).

First-time clients are encouraged to call before an office visit, review eligibility criteria and obtain qualifying documentation.

Call (509) 477-3690 or visit www.spokanecounty.

#### org/1122/Veteran-Services employment. for more information. Washington Department

By Joe Walker American Pacific Mortgage

local veteran was looking for a home loan on a newly constructed manufactured home project. He had up to 5 percent down. He also had acceptable income, debt ratios and credit. The project total cost was \$300,000.

A 95 percent conventional manufactured home loan would require 5 percent down, or \$15,000 plus closing costs (approximately \$7,000). The mortgage insurance would be \$373.50 a month. By using a VA home loan,

the veteran was able to keep his down payment for a rainy day, get 100 percent financing and only had to pay closing costs. His VA loan does not have mortgage insurance and because he has a VA disability, his loan funding fee was waived.

This veteran saved \$15,000 out of pocket and has a payment that is over \$350 a month less than a conventional payment.

Ask a lender or Realtor for more information about VA Loan options and opportunities.



VA Benefit's Navigator

he VA website features an easyto-use digital tool called Benefits Navigator to help veterans and family members identify benefit eligibly.

It takes less than 20 minutes to complete a multiple-choice questionnaire regarding a veteran's service history to provide a list of benefits that you may be eligible to receive. Benefits Navigator can be used by veterans, service members and their

families.

This online form keeps your personal information secure and can help begin the process of receiving earned benefits, including disability compensation, education and training, employment services, health care, home loan and housing-related assistance, life insurance, memorial benefits and pension. Visit explore.va.gov/ benefits-navigator to get started.



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#### **HEY, BUSINESSES DID YOU KNOW**

You can qualify for tax breaks by hiring veterans?

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax incentive for businesses that hire candidates from certain target groups, including qualified veterans. Your company can reduce federal business taxes from \$2,400 to \$9,600 per eligible employee.

Apply online through a Secure Access Washington (SAW) account. All applications must be submitted within 28 days of the employee's start date. If you don't have a SAW account, register through WorkSourceWA.com.



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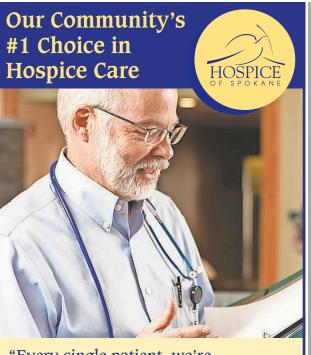
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-Dr. Bob Bray Hospice of Spokane Medical Director

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#### HEY, VETERANS DID YOU KNOW

You can make appointments for glasses and hearing aids?

Veterans enrolled with the VA don't need a referral. Contact the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane for appointments. Call Audiology at (509) 434-7008 or Eye Clinic at (509) 434-7032 (appointments can also be made in Coeur d'Alene).

# **HOW CAN I GET HELP?**

Every county and state has a Veteran Affairs office to answer questions about benefits and provide assistance. There are also other useful resources for veterans in the Inland Northwest.



#### **GO ONLINE**

#### VA.gov

The Department of Veterans Affairs website has resources on every topic relevant to veterans.

#### VA.gov/welcome-kit

The VA Welcome Guide covers all types of benefits and services available for veterans, new recruits, active service members and their families.

#### DAV9.com

Based in Post Falls, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 9 Fort Sherman shares links and information to both local and national help organizations for veterans.

#### Explore.VA.gov/benefitsnavigator

Explore VA benefits and discover which ones you and your family may be eligible to receive.



#### **IN PERSON**

#### Spokane County Regional Veteran Service

1117 N. Evergreen Rd., Spokane Valley, WA (509) 477-3690

Apply for emergency services, or have any benefits or service questions answered by 3 Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and staff.

#### North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

120 E. Railroad Ave., Post Falls, ID (208) 446-1092

Meet with a VSO or staff for help with VA benefits enrollment, claims or other veteran needs.

# Goodwill Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

130 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA (509) 828-2449

SSVF helps homeless veterans and their families find housing and connects veterans with other support organizations.



#### BY PHONE

Spokane County Regional Veteran Service (509) 477-3690

North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits Office

(208) 446-1092

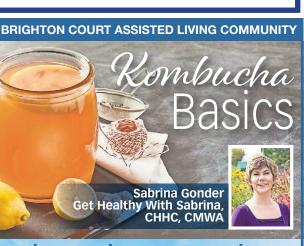
**Veteran Crisis Line** 1 (800) 273-8255, press 1

North Idaho Crisis Center

(208) 625-4884

Washington or Idaho 2-1-1

Dial "2-1-1" for health and human resources referrals.



## Thursday, March 7 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Join our guest presenter Sabrina Gonder and learn the basics about Kombucha and the 7 top reasons to consume this healthy beverage!

Kombucha is an ancient living health drink made by fermenting tea and sugar with a Kombucha culture (SCOBY). The result can taste like something between sparkling apple cider and champagne, depending on what kind of tea you use. It's not what you'd imagine fermented tea to taste like.

For more information or to reserve a seat please call (509) 926-4533

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# Adaptive monoskiing brings back confidence



By Brent King

fter my U.S. Army training accident in July 1994, I had six months of rehabilitation as a paraplegic at the Seattle VA on the Spinal Cord Injury Unit. The rehab was top-notch and I learned many ways to navigate my new world from a wheelchair.

Once I was home, I didn't really know the direction I was going to go in life. I was an Airborne Infantry 2nd Lieutenant and now I was a disabled veteran. I would

sleep a lot during the day and watch TV at night. Little did I know the cycle was soon going to burst.

My dad and the Spokane VA Chief of Prosthetics, Guy Lounsbury, decided I needed to attend the 1995 National Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Crested Butte, Colo. They planned to get me skiing again, something I learned in a phone call

from Guy.

I stated that I did not care to try skiing sitting down. He told me, "Tough, your tickets are in the mail and you're going." The old Vietnam Marine convinced me with his gruff and blunt words. It was the tough love that I needed at the time!

The date came to fly to Colorado and it was the second-best thing that could have happened to me at the time. Just before leaving to ski, I ran into a girl I knew from college; little did I know that she'd

become my future wife.

The skiing gave me my self-confidence back and pulled me out of my pity party. I was among 200 other disabled veterans who were smiling and having fun. Veterans have a special bond and we make a good time out of any venue!

The goal of a lot of adaptive ski clinics and camps is to introduce disabled veterans to the gear and how to use it. Once you're done with these events, there

> are many ways to obtain gear with the goal of being an independent adaptive skier. As veterans, adaptive gear can be provided if you qualify and show you will use the gear.

I have now been monoskiing for over 20 years. I've only missed a few seasons because of health issues. My 17-year-old twins hit the local ski hills with me now and we can get my wife to go once in

awhile, too. This is a life sport that can put you on a level playing field with your family and friends.

If you're a veteran interested in adaptive skiing, I can help you reach the right contacts at the VA to see if you qualify for adaptive ski clinics and gear. Call (509) 939-4878 or email Bkinghomes@gmail. com for more information.

#### HEY, **VETERANS** DID YOU **KNOW**

You can get paid while you go to school?

Any veteran using a VA education benefit is eligible for a VA Work Study, which pays state minimum wage tax free.

Learn about your valuable education benefits at the Services for Veterans workshop at WorkSource Spokane on the first and third Monday of every month starting in March, 9:30 a.m. at 130 S. Arthur St. Call (509) 532-3120 or visit www.worksourcespokane.com. In Idaho, contact Department of Labor Veteran Services Representatives at 600 N Thornton St., Post Falls or (208) 457-8789.

#### HEY, **VETERANS** DID YOU **KNOW**

Benefits are available for Vietnam veterans with Parkinson's disease or prostate cancer?

Due to presumed exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam, these are two of 14 currently listed presumptive diseases that automatically qualify veterans to receive VA health care benefits and a monthly disability check. For more information, contact the Spokane County Regional Veterans Services at (509) 477-3690 or the North Idaho Veteran Services and Benefits at (208) 446-1092.

## Veteran success begins with trust

eterans should know that coming to WorkSource Spokane isn't always about employment.

Trish, a homeless veteran, wasn't ready for employment when she first arrived at WorkSource. She had spent nearly three years hitchhiking to Spokane from Florida. She experienced very unsafe situations and trauma during that harrowing experience, which was compounded by trauma she had experienced in the military. She had also lost trust in the VA system after asking for help in Florida but not receiving assistance.

Unbeknownst to Trish, the VA had awarded her a pension but had not been able to contact her due to her homelessness. After three years, her pension had accumulated a substantial amount. With the WorkSource team's encouragement, understanding and ability to build trust, Trish was willing to let them reconnect her to the VA system. She was able to access her pension funds, which immediately got her out of her homeless situation and renewed her trust in the veteran services she'd earned through her honorable service.

Whatever the struggles a veteran is facing, veteran representatives at WorkSource are familiar with all the community resources available to help local veterans.

Provided by WorkSource, an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities (Washington Relay 711).



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