

October 3, 2009 Illinois Veterans Home Advisory Council Meeting

The Illinois Veterans Home at Quincy Advisory Council met on Oct 3, 2009 in Lippincott Hall at the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy, IL. The meeting was chaired by Bill Francis, Advisory Council President. Mr. Bruce Vaca/IL Veterans Home Administrator welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation for the support Advisory Council Members and Veterans organizations provided to the home. Senator Sullivan and Representative Tracy were not in attendance. Mr. Stuart Reeves, Chief of Staff of the Illinois Veterans Affairs expressed his appreciation to Mr. Vaca for filling in at other veterans Homes in the state when there were vacancies. He also thanked Cathy Page, Dir. of Nursing for filling in for Mr. Vaca while he was gone. He also expressed appreciation for Dave Clifford, Maintenance Engineer for the IL Vets Home who also filled in at the LaSalle Vets Home facility in the State during a vacancy. Mr. Reeves mentioned this, because it shows the quality of work force at the Quincy facility.

The Advisory Council approved an amendment to Article III – Membership on the IL Veterans Home Advisory Committee which added Subsection “a” to read “The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is the only non-Veterans organization, voted an approved by the Council floor in the year 1994, to be a recognized voting member of this Council.”

There was a discussion about repairing the WWII memorial dedicated to members from Adams County who served During WWII. Harry Hendricks reported the memorial had been moved from Washington Park to the Vets Home near the Security Entrance of the Main building in the 70’s. Names are fading out due to sun exposure. Mr. Vaca reported that it will take about \$11,000 to repair. They will be using newer materials and extending the copper roof to better protect the names as well as provide some sort of ventilation as there is none now which also may be contributing to the deterioration. There was discussion that there may be people who were inadvertently left off originally. It was suggested that anyone who may know of someone whose name should be on there contact Rick Gennebacher/Public Relations at the Vet Home to find out what documentation would be needed to verify they served from Adams County during the time frame designated for WWII. The DAV has made a commitment to assist in providing funds and encourages other veterans’ organizations to do the same.

There was discussion about the Coffee Shop (now called the Canteen) which is currently being operated by the Business Enterprise Program for the Blind. Mr. Vaca provided an update. The new managers have tried to have it open on weekends, but found it was not feasible. They currently are open Monday thru Friday for Breakfast to 2 P.M. He said they provide an excellent Breakfast and Lunch. Unfortunately, not enough people are using it so currently they are loosing money. He believes some people are boycotting the place because they replaced the vending machines with ones that are standard throughout the State as they also have the State contract for maintain the Rest Stops on the Interstate Highways in Illinois. The new vending machines provide a larger bottle of pop which some patrons do not like. Also, because this is a State facility they have to provide Pepsi products as Pepsi was awarded the State contract. Mr. Vaca said the majority of patrons are mostly staff of the Vets Home, some residents and some from outside the Vets Home. Current residents are not as mobile as those in past years so the patron base has changed. Prior to the new contractors, the Coffee Shop was loosing up to \$13,000 a year. He is unsure the new operators will be able to keep the Canteen going if more people do not utilize it. A staff member who works the evening shift said it closes before they come on duty. Mr. Vaca said they did a survey of the evening shift and they did not get enough people wanting it to justify staying open longer. They do now have a vending machine that provides cans of pop at \$.75 each along with a selection that has food which he is not sure they will be able to maintain if it is not used. There is a provision for Residents to use coupons at the Canteen. About \$2,500 to \$3,000 is provided to Residents.

Mr. Stuart Reeves, Chief of Staff of the Illinois Veterans affairs asked the Advisory Council for their guidance on whether to change the provision in the criteria for hiring a Vets Home Administrator that the person be a veteran. He explained they are having problems finding people who have been a veteran and have the license and qualifications to be a Vets Home Administrator. A show of hands indicated a unanimous vote to keep the veteran requirement. Even changing it to "veteran preferred" failed. Various Advisory Council members expressed feelings that the "veteran" requirement needed to stay. One member mentioned that under the previous administration the "veterans preferred" allowed for a lot of hiring of non-veterans in jobs related to serving veterans. A discussion followed and several suggestions were made including working with various colleges to coordinate an internship program at the IL Vets Homes. Another suggestion was to notify the schools veteran's coordinators (now required at all IL colleges) about open positions in the field of Veterans Home Administration. It was also suggested that openings be published in veteran's publications. Mr. Reeves asked if the publications would do it for free. It was suggested he check with the publications editors but, if the announcement were in the form of an article and it would be free for sure. Mr. Vaca informed the Advisory Council that he pay for Vets Home Administrators is far below what he and others could make in salary (\$20 - \$30,000 more) working for other health care facilities. He said it is more of a "calling" to be a Vets Home Administrator. He said this is also true for Director of Nurses and others who care for veterans. It was mentioned that SIU in Carbondale had a Hospital Administrator's program as a possible contact for an internship program.

Department Reports Summary: Out of the current 449 Residents, 195 are in Skilled Care, 207 in Intermediate Care, and 47 in Domiciliary care. The waiting list consisted of 7 for Skilled Care, 5 for Schapers A & B and 5 for Intermediate for a total of 17. The average age is 80 years old with the oldest being 100 and the youngest 48 with 191 from WWII. There are 364 Males and 14 Female veterans and 71 Female non-veterans. Since April 1st they have admitted 67, re-admitted 3 and lost 54 to death and 5 were discharged. There are 525 employees of the Home with 105 having veteran's status. 260 Nursing employees of which 23 are veterans 250 non-nursing of which 84 are veterans. Budget wise, the payroll is \$28,150,900 with benefits of \$4,313.954. They contract for \$3,066.500 with Commodities of \$4,733,700 and \$54,600 for all other line items.

Wish list: Sandblasting & Repairing Two Water Fountains \$10,000; Permanent Outdoor Furniture Fund (Replaced as funds are donated); Printing a Mailing Expense for the BUGLE (Donations are appreciated); and Donations to the Residents Benefit (Activities) Fund (Donations of all sizes are appreciated).

Mr. Vaca reported the VA has contracted out the surveys that are conducted. This may be a problem if the contractor hire people who survey the surveyors (Look back Surveys) as it tends to increase the number of write ups. At one time they had 16 surveyors at the Home at the same time.

H1N1 Flu Plans: The Director of Nursing/Cathy Page reported they have plans to combat the H1N1 Flu virus both to keep the flu out and contain it if there is a problem at the Home. They plan to isolate infected patients. They are currently offering the normal Flu shot to the employees now and will offer the H1N1 shot when it is available. Mr. Vaca reported they got 70-83% participation from the Home employees, which is higher than normal as they cannot require the flu shot to be taken. The plan includes screening incoming Residents and placing them in separate building till they are sure they are not infected. The plan also includes volunteers at the Home. She reported that recently the U of I had 700 cases of the H1N1 flu. Their policy is to send the students home if they have the flu which then opens the door to it spreading even more throughout the state.

Mr. Vaca reported some of the things they are doing at the Home. The old canopy will be installed in the back. They discovered the flag poles around the Civil War statue needed replacing so they have re-drilled and re-anchored the holes so they can bring back having the flags around the statue on Avenue

of Flag Days and other occasions. The sunken garden in front of Markwood was having problems as they had critters falling in the pool and then not able to get out, dying and plugging up the drain. They have removed the bushes around the pool and this has solved the problem.

Bill Francis, Advisory Council President mentioned some of the delegate authorizations are out of date and he encouraged organizations represented, to get their authorization forms updated. Whitey Pohlman asked about the new program that allows the Vets Home to get more per diem for veterans who have a service connected disability of 70% or more. In that case the Home does not charge the veteran anything to be in the Home.

For the Good of the Order: There was discussion concerning the **Honor Flights for WWII Veterans** to transport them to Washington D.C. to see the WWII Memorial. It is a one day trip and any WWII veteran is eligible including those in wheel chairs. The only exception is those on a gurney. All they have to do is apply and the trip and all is "free" to the veteran. The application will be available at the Vets Home and also can be gotten off the internet at: <http://www.honorflight.org>. The one day flight originates out of Chicago, St. Louis or Springfield starting at 4 AM and returning at 9PM. A member of the Advisory Council said there is currently a 9 month waiting list, so they paid for and originated their own flight for members in their area and they were glad they did as one of those who went is now deceased. It was mentioned that one of the results of filling out the application is they have a "mail call" on the return flight and every veterans gets mail from well wishers and family. It is believed there is a group in Quincy setting up a program here. The program is completely run by volunteers and paid for by donations. It was started about 5 years ago by a group of women who thought it would be a neat idea to do and it has grown from there. Southwest airlines has been the main carrier for the program.

Check Presentation: The DAV Auxiliary of IL gave a check for \$300 to the Activity Fund. The **Military Wall Memorial** will be at the Capitol in Springfield Nov. 10-12. The **Income Tax Check Off** is still on the Income tax form to support the Veterans Homes and members are encouraged to check it when they submit their state taxes in the spring. Also, there is **new Veterans Lottery ticket** being issued. Members are encouraged to ask the local stores that have lottery tickets to include this Lottery ticket in their machines as they have a choice as which tickets they carry. Proceeds for both go to support the Veterans Home for things that are not covered under the normal funding of the Homes. **Veterans Parade Nov 7th in Quincy** will be in downtown Quincy and then units will parade around the Vet Home grounds. Hopefully it will be warmer so Residents can be outside to view the parade as last year it was a cold day. **Volunteers need to Check In** and get an identification badge, if they will be in contact with Residents at the home. For group meetings like the Advisory Council it is not necessary as members are not in contact with Residents. This policy was established to protect the Residents and their belonging, as there has been cases of theft at the Home by outsiders. **Employee Recognition Day is Oct 28th.** **Resident Christmas Party is December 18th.**

Next Advisory Council meeting is April 10th.

N.F. Pohlman

American Legion, 3D Div. Delegate