

VETERANS.

ink

A publication of Veterans Inc.

www.veteransinc.org

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of "Veterans Ink," designed to bring you the biggest and brightest news from Veterans Inc., New England's largest provider of services for veterans. Along with our newly designed website (www.veteransinc.org), this newsletter is our way of offering you a glimpse into our many worthwhile programs, and the people who bring them to life.

★ EMPLOYEE PROFILE ★

Brian McNeil, Case Manager

Veterans Inc. Case Manager Brian McNeil is also a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, who is about to be deployed to Afghanistan for a year. He shares his views on the organization's work in this interview.

What do you think about the work Veterans Inc. does for its clients?

Programs like the Food Bank, Case Management, Outreach, Employment & Training, smoking cessation and even the sewing and enrichment activities definitely support veterans in need and veterans coming off of active duty or deployment.

What role do you have, working with veterans?

I am a Case Manager and Outreach Coordinator/Facilities Manager at Sheridan St. and I help out at the Veterans Service Organization office in the town of Boylston, referring vets to VA hospitals and other services and organizations.

Describe a Veterans Inc. client who stood out to you.

Peter [not his real name] was in a very technical field in the military and is an



Brian in Iraq

overwhelmingly intelligent service member. He stands out in my mind because of his outstanding work as a professional in the medical field. He helped people in a very intimate way. Along with that, he came in direct contact with some extremely strong narcotics, and he became dependent upon them and ended up ruining his career, family, and life. He went from making many thousands of dollars a year to living out of his car. Through living here, he has recovered from his addiction. He has also sought out and, with the help of a case manager, found the benefits he needs. He is now reestablishing relationships with his family and others that had been destroyed by his addiction.

The Employment & Training program gave Peter the training tools he needed, but he sought out the training himself. Case Managers

Continued on page 3

Message from Denis Leary Executive Director



Denis Leary

To paraphrase the author G.B. Stern, "gratitude should never be silent." And in my hometown of Shrewsbury, like most other Massachusetts towns where our veterans live, appreciation for the men and women of the Armed Forces is far from silent.

From the small coffee shop conversations to the comments one hears in line at the Post Office, gratitude for our veterans is loud and proud.

Not only is Massachusetts wonderfully supportive of veterans, so are all the other states where Veterans Inc. is located. Whether it's in Bradford, Vermont; Augusta, Maine; New Britain, Connecticut; or Lyons, New Jersey; the positive atmosphere is always there.

The powerful effect that gratitude has on veterans should never be underestimated. As a young boy growing up during the Vietnam War, I witnessed first-hand the hurtful effect it had when veterans came back to silence and sneers.

Although our staff works tirelessly to assist our veterans, it's the gratitude from members of the community that means the most. From the smiles of the church group volunteers who cook in our kitchens, to the shouts of "Thank You!" from motorists driving by our buildings...it's the community's attitude that has the biggest impact.

So, on behalf of all the veterans we serve, thank you for your support, and thanks for not being silent.

Best wishes,

Meet Janie, Air Force Veteran & Long-Term Housing Resident

What was your military experience?

I served in the Air Force from 1979 to 1986. I was a Crash Rescue Fire Fighter for my entire enlistment. I served in the Azores, islands off the coast of Portugal. The Air Force has Crash Rescue Fire Fighters stationed at every airfield to respond to emergencies. Their mission is to save pilots and fight aircraft fires, whether large frame or jet aircraft – everything from C-5's to F-16's. Mine was a regular duty assignment. I did not serve in a war. When I left active duty, I went into the Air Force Reserve, and worked in civil service at the fire department at Westover.

What brought you to Veterans Inc?

What got me to where I am now was a series of bad decisions in relationships. In about a 3-year span I went through a very nasty divorce and I lost everything. After the divorce I tried to find a place where I could start over, a place where I belonged. I tried going back home to Georgia and that didn't work out. I came back up here and tried living with a friend, and that didn't work out either. When I was told I couldn't live with my friend any more, I had been at a new job for 60 days. With the new job I thought, "This is my opportunity," but suddenly I didn't have a place to live. I was driving back and forth from Springfield where my daughter lived to north central Massachusetts to work, and when I couldn't commute the many miles from her house to work my shift, I was living in my car so I could keep my job.

I started going to counseling at the Bedford VA medical center, but I couldn't keep my



"At Veterans Inc., you are more than just a number or a name on the computer screen." — Janey

appointments. When I told [my counselor] why I was unable to keep the appointments, she and another counselor got the ball rolling. Within days they hooked me up with a VA representative, and she connected me with Bob Persley, the Case Manager at the Veterans Inc. housing in Ayer [the former Fort Devens] where I live. [Editor's note: Janie shares a 3-bedroom bungalow with two other women.] Bob has been just wonderful. He has helped me so much, and he introduced me to Joseph Ryan at Veterans Inc. who helped me get into school. Bob keeps in touch with me on a regular basis. We talk a lot. When my son recently came home [on leave], it was a wonderful but difficult time. This is my only son coming home from the military and I didn't have a home for him to come home to. I spoke with Bob about

how difficult this was, and about how much I need to have my own home and support myself independently.

What do you want to accomplish while living at Veterans Inc?

I am starting on a liberal arts degree and am enrolled in a health sciences program. I am taking care of prerequisites in order to get into a nursing program. I am currently working at a hospital, as a Patient Care Assistant, where I draw labs, assist in

some surgical procedures, and work with nurses to care for patients.


What is your plan for transitioning out of our housing?

The program that I want to get into, if all goes well, should take 2½ years to complete. In the meantime, I may be able to obtain a different type of more independent housing. We will look into this once things are more settled – I've just started school. Living at Devens right now is great.

My tour of duty fell into a gray area, at a time when there was a complete change of benefits, and I am not eligible for any veterans' benefits. I do not qualify for the GI bill for my education and that is where Joe Ryan stepped in to help. With his help, through Veterans Inc., I have obtained funding for my first semester so I can start back to school quickly, and keep the momentum going. When you come to terms with things later on in life, you appreciate the value of time.

What would you like the public to know about you and your experience?

If it hadn't been for being a veteran, I am not sure where I would be.

Veterans Inc. provides a real wealth of opportunities, but you have to be willing to put in the time and the effort. The people have been great. The one thing that is very different in dealing with other [non-veteran] programs, for example state programs, is that those case managers have an overwhelming case load and they can't give you the time or connect you with the resources you need. I haven't found that here. At Veterans Inc., you are more than just a number or a name on the computer screen. 

Case Manager Jessica Lemenager started a quilting club as a Health & Wellness social enrichment activity. Grove Street resident Steven, pictured here, is a proud member of the "Quilting V's," which uses sewing machines and supplies donated by the School House Quilters of Shrewsbury, Mass. Steven completed this quilt just in time for his daughter's 11th birthday.



Employment & Training in Action

The way Employment & Training Manager Joe Ryan sees it, developing people is the true purpose of the Employment & Training program. To accomplish this, Veterans Inc. offers targeted job training and counseling on-site at our residential facilities, and partners with employers and education and training providers throughout Massachusetts. We asked Michael, a Gulf War veteran, how the program affected his life.

day. I needed people who were skilled within their respective disciplines to speak to me and bring a sense of security and order to my life. Veterans Inc. staff who specialize in employment, psychiatric care and case management proactively provided the information I needed to create a sense of hope for reintegrating my life with society.

employment goals on one ivory page. Not long after, I participated in a job fair and presented my finished document to a recruiter. To my surprise, I was not only granted a second interview, but a third as well. As of March 7, I am gainfully employed in a very well paid blue-collar position. My plan is to secure full-time employment as a commercial truck driver. I have completed training at the United Tractor Trailer school of Chicopee, Mass.

"I am very impressed with the respect and dignity shown to me by the Residential Advisors. — Michael

Is there anything you would like people to know about your experience living at Veterans Inc?

After working a 10-12 hour day, I look forward to a

good hot meal served with smiles from various organizations, such as the Girls Scouts, who benevolently give of their time, resources and energies for someone like me. It is not easy to live in an atmosphere with little privacy. I am very impressed with the respect and dignity shown to me by the Residential Advisors. I would personally like to thank Vin Perrone and Denis Leary for their continued support of veterans who are deeply in need of the same services that I have been provided.

What is your plan for transitioning out of the program?

One of my personal goals while residing at Veterans Inc. is to build a sustainable savings account to help me transition to a single room occupancy unit or studio apartment that allows cats. 🇺🇸



What was going on in your life that brought you to the shelter at Veterans Inc?

Like any other person, I struggle with personal issues. The economic crisis alone did not affect my decision to enter the program. I am a person who manages PTSD symptoms every

How long have you lived here?

Six hard, long, productive, and thought-out weeks.

How has the Employment & Training Program helped you set and reach your goals?

My Case Manager, Evelyn Absher, is a resourceful, amiable vegetarian woman who helped me to meet my specific goal of returning to work by referring me to Employment Specialist Bob Perry. Another great help came by way of a man named Paul Verdolino. Mr. Verdolino is an instructor here. He teaches a class on résumé creation. Although I already had a professional résumé, I reluctantly participated and formed my first simple CV that conveyed to my future employer the career history and specific

EMPLOYEE PROFILE *(continued from page 1)*

helped him sift through local, state and federal programs to get the benefits he needed to move on with his life. They also got him into some enrichment activities, to develop some softer skills. In addition, he went through the smoking cessation program.

Peter has imminent plans to move out of the shelter, and he is planning to become a drug and alcohol abuse counselor, specifically for veterans. He will start a drug abuse counseling training program in the next few months.

How has being in the military helped you relate to clients?

Serving abroad allows me to understand some of the generalities of the experience of veterans who have been deployed and served abroad. I went to Iraq but I can sit down with someone who served in Vietnam and we can speak the same language



Brian at the Holiday Harvest Food Bank

about frustrations, insecurities and the kind of "us versus them" mentality that can develop between the typical combat veteran and non-serving civilians.

Would you please tell us your thoughts about your upcoming deployment?

On the military side, Afghanistan is much different than Iraq. It's a completely different region, and a different mission for me. I am excited and ready and scared all at the same time. The toughest part will be missing my friends, family and co-workers dearly.

What are your thoughts as you leave Veterans Inc?

As I leave Veterans Inc., I leave behind a place that allowed me to grow professionally and emotionally over the past year and a half. I plan on coming back here, and getting back into veterans' issues, as soon as I return home. 🇺🇸

A Roof Over Their Heads



Meeting Critical Housing Needs

Veterans Inc.'s Housing Program has a success rate of 85% for transitioning clients out of homelessness, one of the highest in the nation. Emergency, transitional and supportive housing is offered at the following facilities. In keeping with Veterans Inc.'s holistic approach, intensive support services ranging from case management to job readiness training are offered at the facilities, to help homeless veterans reintegrate into their families and communities.


1 **Grove Street** in Worcester is the largest one-stop center for veterans in Central Massachusetts, and the only drug- and alcohol-free shelter in the area. It houses up to 85 veterans every day in emergency and transitional facilities.

2 Three renovated triple-deckers on **Cambridge & Canterbury streets** in Worcester offer transitional and permanent supportive housing for 30 veterans.

3 The **Sheridan Street** facility in Worcester includes 10 transitional housing units for women with or without children, an outreach center, and the Little Patriots pre-school for the children of veterans, military families and others.

4 **Independence Hall**, a 40,000-sq- ft. facility on 22 acres in the heart of Shrewsbury, provides transitional housing for 30 veterans, as well as Health & Wellness and Employment & Training services. (Independence Hall also has meeting space and event facilities; see box to the right.)

5 Veterans Inc. manages 14 townhouses and bungalows at the **former Fort Devens** in Ayer, housing 36 individuals, including single women veterans.

6 Veterans Inc.'s newest housing facility is in **Bradford, Vermont** and will offer transitional housing for 10 male veterans. 



Meeting & Function Space for Groups & Businesses

Veterans Inc.'s Independence Hall in Shrewsbury — formerly the Cavalry Retreat Center — provides meeting and conference space for groups and organizations in a serene, landscaped setting nestled in a wooded area just 7 miles from the city of Worcester in Central Massachusetts.

Independence Hall offers training rooms/classrooms, meeting space, a chapel, and a banquet room for conferences and social events. Rooms are equipped with wireless internet access, PC projectors, screens, and sound systems. Catering services are available from Pepper's Fine Foods or the Veterans Inc. chef.

For more information, contact Susan Boucher at (508) 791-1213, ext. 132 or susanboucher@veteransinc.org.

National Recognition... Twice

Veterans Inc. has been awarded not one but two national awards for service to veterans: the Outstanding Service Provider Award from the Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and the Outstanding Member Award from the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV).


“While our employees and volunteers don’t do this job for the recognition, it’s rewarding just the same to receive awards from two paragons of service to veterans, the VA and the NCHV,” says Lt. Colonel Vincent J. Perrone, USAF (retired), president and CEO of Veterans Inc.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki presented his award, which recognizes exceptional service to homeless

veterans, to Perrone and Veterans Inc. Executive Director Denis M. Leary in front of 1,500 people in Washington, D.C. Veterans Inc. was chosen from more than 1,000 veterans organizations across the country.

“This award confirms the standard of excellence set by Veterans Inc. in the provision of services for veterans and their families,” Congressman James McGovern (D-MA) said at the ceremony.

Leary describes the importance of these services: “Deployment to any area of the world has impact on both the veterans and their families. Deployment to a war zone can have significant consequences which often do not surface until the veteran has returned home. Our job is to help the entire family.”

The NCHV selected Veterans Inc. from more than 250 veterans services organizations nationwide, “for two decades of developing assistance programs to help veterans in crisis in the central and western Massachusetts area,” according to NCHV’s website. 



VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki presents the Outstanding Service Provider Award to Veterans Inc. Pictured are (left to right): Finance & Development Director Allison Alaimo, Secretary Shinseki, Executive Director Denis Leary, President & CEO Vincent Perrone, Case Manager/Wellness Coordinator Evelyn Absber, and Community Relations Manager Amanda Riik.

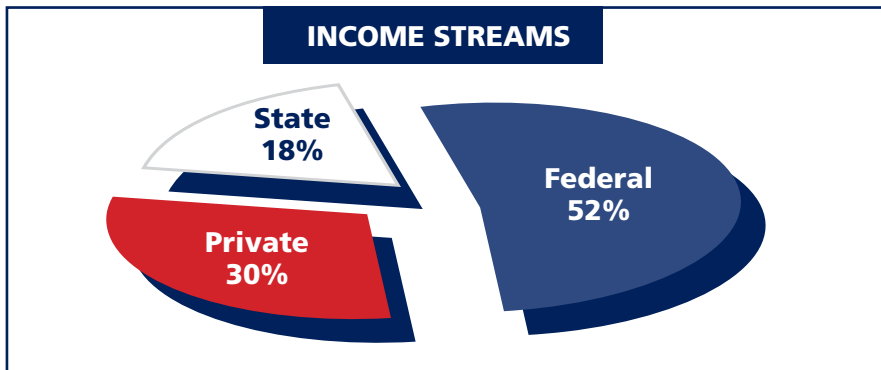
“Deployment to a war zone can have significant consequences which often do not surface until the veteran has returned home. Our job is to help the entire family.”
 — Denis Leary

Visit our new website:
www.veteransinc.org
 and become a
Fan of Veterans Inc.
 on Facebook!

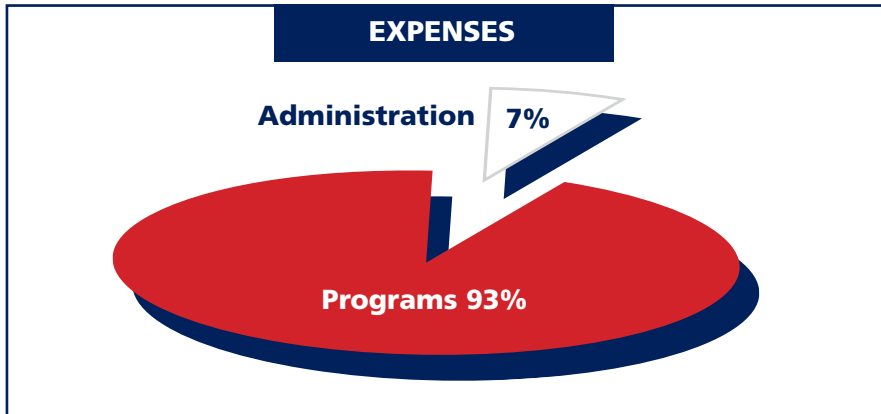


Income & Expenses

Veterans Inc. is fortunate to have several streams of income to fund its important programs. A full 30% comes from individual and corporate donors.



Only 7% of Veterans Inc.’s funds are used for administration, with 93% going directly into programs and services.




Veterans Inc.'s Sweetest Volunteer!

Every Thursday morning for two years, Alice Pearson has parked her car outside the front door of 69 Grove Street and emerged with stacks of containers holding the high point of the day for many Veterans Inc. residents: homemade desserts created in Alice's own kitchen.

Preparing dessert for the nearly 100 people utilizing the Veterans Inc. hot lunch program requires a precise regimen. Alice shops on Monday, and bakes on Tuesday and Wednesday. Before she can start baking each week's five cakes, she has preliminary work to do, laying out dishes, utensils and ingredients in a staging area in her hallway, because her home's "little, tiny" kitchen is too small. After bringing the cakes to Grove Street, she creates individual portions and adds finishing touches such as real whipped cream, caramel or chocolate sauce, cookie bits and maraschino cherries, transforming her labors of love into works of art. For Easter, she created a frosted cake topped with green coconut, Easter eggs and marshmallow bunnies and chicks.

"After I retired, I wanted to volunteer," Alice explains. "I used to bring in the desserts and leave, but Amanda, who coordinates the volunteers, asked if I would like to have a regular day to bring the desserts, and to serve them myself so the veterans would know who was cooking for them."


Alice's dedication earned her an Outstanding Volunteer Award from the United Way. When asked why she comes back week after week Alice says, "We owe the veterans a debt of gratitude. This can hardly pay back our debt, but it's the little bit I can do for them. I love seeing the guys and chatting with them: they add enjoyment to my life. Everyone has their own stories, and they are very appreciative. I get more joy out of cooking for them than they can ever begin to know." 



"We owe the veterans a debt of gratitude. I get more joy out of cooking for them than they can ever begin to know." — Alice



Volunteers in Action

A dozen volunteers from All Saints Church in Worcester (right) have been purchasing, preparing and serving a monthly dinner at the Grove Street program for almost two years as part of a larger Feeding Ministry outreach group. Volunteer Connie Ekstrom says the group's commitment is quite natural: "They've done for us; we have got to do for them." 

**2010
Volunteer
Orientation
Schedule**

From serving meals to running in road races, Veterans Inc. depends on its volunteers to help our veterans. We encourage you to join this diverse group of compassionate community members!

Register for a Volunteer Orientation by contacting Amanda Riik at (508) 791-1213, ext. 123 or amandariik@veteransinc.org.

**Upcoming orientations are on
Wednesdays from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.:**

**July 14
August 18**

Wish List:

Donations of the following are always extremely helpful, and can be dropped off 24 hours a day at 69 Grove Street, Worcester, Mass.

A more comprehensive list is posted on our website, www.veteransinc.org.

For information on donations including how to run a donation drive, please contact Amanda Riik at (508) 791-1213 ext 123 or e-mail AmandaRiik@veteransinc.org



- Bus and train passes
- Gift certificates to sporting events, hardware stores, fast food restaurants, etc.
- Toiletries: deodorant, plastic closeable soap dishes, shampoo
- Clothing: new rubber shower shoes (flip-flops), men's large/extra large, sizes 8-10
- Men's new underwear, all sizes
- New men's sneakers, all sizes
- Postage stamps
- New twin white flat and fitted sheets
- New double white flat and fitted sheets
- New pillows
- New bath towels
- Laundry detergent

Please note: we cannot accept any items containing alcohol, such as some mouthwashes and aftershaves.

Giving From the Heart



Whether handing out packages on Food Bank days or sponsoring the Gala Military Ball, with their every gesture Dorothy and Milton Whiting exemplify the definition of philanthropy: "love of mankind."

For more than 10 years, Milton and Dorothy have supported, tended, and nurtured Veterans Inc. and the clients we serve, with open hearts and unflinching enthusiasm.

Pictured here with Finance & Development Director Allison Alaimo, Executive Director Denis Leary, and President & CEO Vincent Perrone, the couple recently made a gift toward Veterans Inc.'s new South Street facility in Shrewsbury, which will provide long-term, supportive housing; health and wellness programs; and outpatient counseling services for veterans; all in a healing, serene setting on 22 acres.

Not only are Dorothy and Milton the largest private donors to our organization, they are the most ardent supporters of our work and our mission. All of us at Veterans Inc. are richer for their presence in our daily lives. 🇺🇸



(l-r) Allison Alaimo, Denis Leary, Dorothy Whiting, Milton Whiting, and Vincent Perrone.

Message from the President and CEO, Vincent J. Perrone



Vincent J. Perrone, Lt. Colonel,
USAF (Retired)

Veterans Inc. opened its doors to nine homeless veterans in 1992 as a small, grassroots, all-volunteer organization offering cots in an abandoned National Guard Armory. Since then, Veterans Inc. has grown into a professional, comprehensive organization, recognized nationwide for the success of its innovative programs. Since its inception, Veterans Inc. has helped more than 40,000 veterans and their families overcome the chaos of homelessness, re-gain hope, and live the lives of dignity they so richly deserve.

With the deployment of thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan and ongoing operations

in Iraq, we are poised to provide services for soldiers who return to New England with PTSD and other combat-related problems, few resources, and fragile social networks that leave them nowhere else to turn.

With your support, we will continue to serve the many veterans and their families in need who come to us, some of whom you will meet in this newsletter. We invite you to join with us to sustain our organization, and the programs and practices that stand as a model for agencies serving veterans across the country.

Upcoming Events

For information on tickets, volunteering, or sponsoring an event, contact Amanda Riik at (508) 791-1213 ext. 123 or amandariik@veteransinc.org. All events benefit Veterans Inc. unless otherwise noted.

Sat., July 10

FreedomSong 3
Produced by JPerry Productions

Sun., Aug. 15

14th Annual Redemption Rock Bike Run
sponsored by 140 Pub

Sun., Oct. 17

Tim Jackson Memorial Bike Run
sponsored by Sheldon's Harley-Davidson & Buell

Sun., Nov. 7

6th Annual Veterans' Memorial
5K Road Race

Thurs. Nov. 11

Veterans Day Pancake Breakfast

Sat., Nov. 13

Gala Military Ball
Celebrating our 20th Anniversary

*Off with your hat, as the flag goes by!
And let the heart have its say;
you're man enough for a tear in your eye
that you will not wipe away.*

-Henry Cuyler Bunner

