



## McHENRY COUNTY CHAPTER



## "The Chapter with a Heart"

**OCTOBER 2009**

McHenry County Chapter of VietNow

**“THE CHAPTER WITH A HEART”**

**MEETING:** General Meetings are open to the public and are held on **the fourth (4) Tuesday of each month** at 7:30 P. M. at the Woodstock AmVet Post – 12320 Davis Road, Woodstock, IL 60098.

**\*\* BOARD OF DIRECTORS \*\***

PRESIDENT:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939	DIRECTORS:	Rick Cross	815-403-3613
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Bobby Jones	847-409-1947		Joe Ferrenti	815-653-4114
SECRETARY:	Tony Bilus	815-648-2826		Joe Kotarba	815/616-2116
TREASURER:	Steve Rucki	847-458-9850		Bill Richards	815-344-9591
				John Sorensen	815-338-2063

**ADVISORS:** All Past Chapter Presidents

**\*\*COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS \*\***

BYLAWS:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939	NOMINATION/ELECTION:	Joe Kersten	815 338-1796
PROGRAM GRANTS:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939	POW/MIA:	Steve Rucki	847-458-9850
CONVENTION:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939	PTSD:	Alan Belcher	815-334-0411
"JIM TOBER BASKETS":	Rose Lewis	815-568-8939	SERVICE OFFICER:	Ted Biever	815-338-9292
MEMBERSHIP:	Rose Lewis	815-568-8939	“RAP” GROUP INFO:	Alan Belcher	815-334-0411
NEWSLETTER:	Rose Lewis, Editor	815-568-8939	VAC: Delegate:	Joe Kersten	815-338-1796
	Billie Blair, Asst. Editor	815-385-2905	Alternate:	Bobby Jones	847-409-1947

**VETERANS HELPING VETERANS:** This is more than a motto this is the ViêtNow organizations way of life.

**Our Chapter’s Beginning:** In 1982 and 1983, a group of Vietnam Veterans was attending weekly “Rap” group meetings in the McHenry County Health Department building. As time moved along some of the veterans wanted to start an organization because they enjoyed the camaraderie that was in the group. These veterans wanted to stay together but did not want to be a part of the traditional veterans’ organizations.

Someone had heard of a new group that had formed in Rockford Illinois that called itself ViêtNow. A couple of the vets went to a couple of meetings and liked what they said. They brought back information to the group about ViêtNow and their motto of “Veterans Helping Veterans.” Everyone liked the idea of starting a chapter here in McHenry County. It took a lot of work to get this going. In November of 1983, the State of Illinois issued The “McHenry County Chapter of ViêtNow” their State Charter as an Illinois Not-For-Profit Organization. This made the McHenry County Chapter of ViêtNow the **first** expansion chapter in the ViêtNow Veterans’ Organization.

**\*\*NATIONAL OFFICERS \*\***

<b>PRESIDENT:</b>	Rich Sanders (Mary)	<b>DIRECTORS:</b>
<b>VICE-PRESIDENT:</b>	Jim Stepanek (Marcia)	John Davis (Sandy)
<b>SECRETARY:</b>	Darrell Gilgan (Linda)	Gary Eisenhower (Sue)
<b>TREASURER:</b>	Terry Buscher (Linda)	Augie Augustynowicz (Katie)
		John Bates (Dawn)

National Office Telephone: 815-227-5100 and E-mail: [nationalhq@vietnow.com](mailto:nationalhq@vietnow.com)

**EDITORIAL POLICY:** The Newsletter Staff will evaluate all articles submitted as to appropriateness and Relevancy to the goals of ViêtNow. Newsletter items must be submitted to the editorial staff by the Chapter meeting each Month.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

- October 21, 2009 – McHenry County Veterans Assistance Commission meeting
- Woodstock VFW Post 5040 at 7:00 pm
- Board Nominations for the upcoming year
- October 25, 2009 – Breakfast with Friends and Family
- October 27, 2009 – McHenry County Chapter Meeting
- Woodstock AMVETS Post 269, Davis Road at 7:30pm
- November 18, 2009 – McHenry County Veterans Assistance Commission meeting
- Woodstock VFW Post 5040 at 7:00 pm

- Board Elections for the upcoming year and vote to retain current superintendent
- November 22, 2009 – Breakfast with Friends and Family
- November 24, 2009 – McHenry County Chapter Meeting
- Woodstock AMVETS Post 269, Davis Road at 7:30pm
- December 22, 2009 – McHenry County Chapter Meeting – Possible
- Woodstock AMVETS Post 269, Davis Road at 7:30pm

### President's Ramblings

Joe Lewis aka "Boxer, your Chapter President

**Have you ever wondered!** How did ViêtNow first get its name? A long story short, there were two guys from Rockford who met in Vietnam. They had become friends and wanted to get together back in the "World." Their names are Nick Parnell and Joey Falzone. They started getting together for a meal from time to time. As they met other Nam vets they would ask them to join their little supper group.

Everyone enjoyed this so much that they decided to form a group that was first named after the base that Nick and Joey had first met. The group decided to change the name to suit who they all were and what their concerns are now. They chose the name ViêtNow that represented Vietnam and Vietnam Era veterans and their problems Now. Thus, this was what gave way to the name "ViêtNow."

After the first Gulf War, Desert Storm, ViêtNow opened their membership to all veterans who served from 1957 to "Now." This was a change that came about after a lot of discussion and a vote of the entire ViêtNow membership.

*What next for our great organization you might be thinking.* We are experiencing resurgence in our small but great group. Everyday a new veteran hears about us and wants to know more. We try to reach out to all veterans, but the younger vets think that our name defines us to strictly Vietnam and Vietnam Era veterans only. We need a means to clear up that misconception about who ViêtNow is. But how do we go about doing this? If any of you have any suggestions, please do not hesitate to share your views with us. We need your input.

**Stepping Up!** Think about this one for a little while. Given the fact that there was a draft going on for many years, there was always a waiting list for those who wanted to join. Sure, there were those who chose to leave our country and reside in another land. Because they felt this is what they could live with. However, the majority of our men chose to make the transition into the military instead of leaving the USA for another country. Why did they make this decision? It was their patriotic duty to support and defend the good ol' USA.

Today there does not appear to be that same feeling with our youth. We are always reading of how this branch or that branch of the military might not make their recruitment quota that month. Why is that I keep wondering? With the lack of jobs the way they are, one would almost expect that there would be waiting list for those wanting to enter the military. Do today's youth have the same belief that it is there patriotic duty to be a part of the military?

I am not sure just what it is for the lack of responsibility to be a part of serving our country. Maybe, just maybe, the youth see how the government treats her veterans and they do not want to be a part of that fascia that their fathers, uncles, cousin's, or their friends have endured.

While the VA Medical system is improving greatly, their record of accomplishment on treatment of Vietnam, Desert Storm, and the current Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom veterans has been a little behind in the trust department. That is my belief and I am sticking to it.

**Double Standard!** Followed is a little story that is fact. Names and places has been changed for purposes that will be known to only me.

Several years ago, I'm arrested and tried for breaking and entry, and robbery. When the trial is over, I receive a conviction for a felony. My sentence is confinement for four-years as a resident of the State of Illinois. When I complete my time, I

walk away with a felony on my record that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Employers see this when they do a background check for a potential job. I have screwed up my life for the rest of my life. Because of my past I can not get a decent job to support my family.

Several years ago, I am accused and convicted of having sex with an underage minor. I plead guilty to a felony and receive a five-year sentence. To hell with the law, I say. I run away to another land where they cannot touch me and I continue my great money making career.

One day I decide that I want to return to the United States. My old friends go to bat for me and tell everyone that I have served my time by not being able to live in the USA all these years and that this should be considered as my "time served." My case is in the media and everyone is debating on removing my jail time. If I can return home, I can continue my life style of drugs and the fine life of wine and roses. After all, I am a big shot high profile person of the world. Why is this going to be held against me?

These stories are fact. Read your newspapers or your online news sources. This might be wrong, but here is how I look at it. If convicted of a felony, you lose your right to vote and to own a weapon, and you should not be able to hold an elective office. As a convicted felon, you have lost these rights and several others. If you serve your time and any following probation time without incident, each person should be able to request to the judicial system to see if they can have their record sealed for purposes of seeking employment.

If you are an entertainer or an actor in today's society you can do anything and you can go right back to your high paying job when you are done serving your time. If you are an ordinary person you have it held against you and everyone cares about it. We need a way to even this system out so that we can eliminate this *double standard*.

**Agent Orange and DVA Updates!** In this months newsletter there is some very good information on Agent Orange and some DVA Benefits. I hope that this information can be useful to you and with others that you share your newsletter.

The first grouping that follows has to do with new illnesses that the DVA is establishing as "service-connected" and compostable for exposure to Agent Orange. If you are receiving this newsletter by email, simply click on any of the links and happy reading. If you get this by way of USPS and have a computer, write the link into your browser and off you go after you hit the enter or go tab. For those without internet access, sorry. You will have to find someone to help you.

You are the Best of Your Generation,  
*YOU* Are ViêtNow

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## **VA Extends "Agent Orange" Benefits to More Veterans**

### **Parkinson's Disease and Two Other Illnesses Recognized**

WASHINGTON (Oct. 13, 2009) - Relying on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki decided to establish a service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to Agent Orange.

The illnesses affected by the recent decision are **B cell leukemia's**, such as hairy cell leukemia; **Parkinson's disease**; and **ischemic heart disease**.

Used in Vietnam to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy, Agent Orange left a legacy of suffering and disability that continues to the present. Between January 1965 and April 1970, an estimated 2.6 million military personnel who served in Vietnam were potentially exposed to sprayed Agent Orange.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a "presumed" illness don't have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

The Secretary's decision brings to 15 the number of presumed illnesses recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

"We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will," Shinseki added. "Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence."

Other illnesses previously recognized under VA's "presumption" rule as being caused by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are:

\* Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/peripheral\\_neuropathy.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/peripheral_neuropathy.asp)

\* AL Amyloidosis

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/al\\_amyloidosis.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/al_amyloidosis.asp)

\* Chloracne

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/chloracne.asp>

\* Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/chronic\\_leukemia.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/chronic_leukemia.asp)

Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/diabetes.asp>

\* Hodgkin's Disease

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/hodgkins.asp>

\* Multiple Myeloma

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/multiple\\_myeloma.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/multiple_myeloma.asp)

\* Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/nh\\_lymphoma.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/nh_lymphoma.asp)

\* Porphyria Cutanea Tarda

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/porphyria.asp>

\* Prostate Cancer

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/prostate\\_cancer.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/prostate_cancer.asp)

\* Respiratory Cancers

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/respiratory\\_cancers.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/respiratory_cancers.asp) , and

\* Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)

[http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/st\\_sarcoma.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/st_sarcoma.asp)

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA's services and programs for Veterans exposed to the chemical are available at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agent\\_orange](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agent_orange)  
<<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/>>

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**Special Report:** A Fake Warrior and the "Wall That Heals" - By Larry Stimeling Staff Writer

James Richard Lyons is a hero. He joined the Navy in 1964 at age 17. James went through some of the military's most rigorous training schools, including;

SEAL Training Force Recon, Jungle Warfare Training in Panama, and Special weapons in Quantico. James served four-tours in Vietnam and attained the rank of GySgt. He received a Silver Star and a Purple Heart. That is a lot for a four-year enlistment.

But there is a problem, A BIG PROBLEM!

James Richard Lyons now drives the rig that hauls the Wall That Heals around the country. The Wall That Heals is owned and operated by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF). The VVMF hired Richard last year to do the driving because the former drivers retired.

The VVMF should have done a better job at selecting a driver. It seems Richard may not be all that he claims to be. His page on what was classmates.com says he graduated high school in 66.

Yet he claims to have enlisted in 64.

There is no record of his receiving a Silver Star. In fact, there is no record of his serving in the military at all according to the POWNETWORK.org at <http://www.pownetwork.org/phonies/phonies554.htm>

There is no need for me to go over any more of the claims of Richard Lyons or the counter claims of the POWNETWORK and others. You can see them for yourself at the sites above.

What we need now is to request, NO DEMAND, that the VVMF investigate the military history of its employee and if it verifies that Mr. Lyons is a fraud, *Remove* him from his position. In addition, the VVMF should assist the Federal Authorities in prosecuting Lyons under the Stolen Valor Act if it finds he is representing himself as something he is not.

It has been stated that only one in five men who claim to be Vietnam Veterans actually served in Vietnam. The prosecution of those who are now claiming to be something they are not must be relentless and to the fullest extent of the law. I cannot imagine why someone would want to claim to have gone through what we did in country and when we came home. Then again, it was wannabe who made things bad for us at home!

Here is an update on last month's story about James Richard Lyons, the driver of the truck that carries the Wall That Heals from one location to another.

James, as you may recall, has claimed to be a gunny in the Marines who enlisted in the Navy and served 4 tours in Vietnam from 64 to 68 even though he was in high school in 66. Here, as Paul Harvey would say is the rest of the story.

### **James Richard Lyons no longer works for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.**

After the story ran on [VeterasToday.com](#) "[A Fake Warrior and the Wall that Heals](#)" James was relieved of duty and Cary Dees replaced him.

Cary was the driver for many years and was replaced by Lyons at the beginning of this tour schedule.

Jan Scruggs and the VVMF did not hesitate to replace Lyons. I hope that when it comes time to find another driver, they do an extensive background check to make sure they do not hire another wannabe.

As for Mr. Lyons, he should be prosecuted for his actions under the Stolen Valor Act. No one should be allowed to claim he was awarded a Purple Heart or a Silver Star they did not earn! 'Nuff said!



My name is Cara Hammer. I served in Iraq from 2004-2005 with the First Infantry Division, and I am proud of my service.

I know firsthand that women face a unique set of challenges when it comes to serving in the military, and getting care at the VA afterward. But most Americans are unaware of what Women Warriors like me are facing.

That's why IAVA is proud to announce the release of our latest Issue Report - "[Women Warriors: Supporting She 'Who Has Borne the Battle.'](#)"

The report is for everyone from journalists to researchers to concerned citizens. We want all Americans to better understand the service and sacrifice of women like me. And this month, we're bringing it specifically to lawmakers in Washington.

[Will you help us gain momentum by signing our letter to members of Congress, urging them to make the issues facing female veterans a priority? In the coming weeks, we'll hand deliver your signatures to Capitol Hill, along with copies of the new report.](#)

This new Issue Report includes an overview of the challenges facing our Women Warriors, including barriers to VA healthcare, mental health injuries, and economic challenges, like homelessness and unemployment. Women make up 11% of the forces that have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and our numbers are growing. That is why the report also features concrete recommendations for what the Veterans Administration and Department of Defense can do to overcome those challenges.

This is just one of the ways IAVA is working to improve care for our troops and veterans - by offering constructive solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing our community.

So please stand with us, and add your name today. Help us get the report into the hands of the people that need to see it most.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Cara



Cara Hammer  
Veteran Support Associate  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

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### **No COLA, But Some May See \$250**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics released the September inflation figure this week and confirmed what retirees already knew - there will not be any Social Security, retired pay, VA disability pay, or SBP COLA for 2010.

Because inflation for the full fiscal year actually declined by 2.1%, that means we'll start 2.1% in the hole in counting down the COLA for the January 2011 COLA, too.

On the brighter side, President Obama this week called for legislation to renew for 2010 the \$250 economic stimulus payment that Social Security annuitants and VA disability compensation recipients received earlier this year. White House officials said the \$250 payment should not be viewed as a "substitute COLA". They pointed out that several other provisions of the 2009 stimulus package covered two years, and that it was appropriate to renew this provision for another year, recognizing that many seniors and disabled people were still struggling with the effects of large retirement savings losses.

Officials said it would take three or four months to issue the \$250 checks once Congress clears and the president signs the legislation. Assuming Congress acts before the end of the year, eligible's could see the \$250 checks in April or May.

They stressed that the eligibility would be for one \$250 payment. People who are eligible for both Social Security and VA disability compensation would receive a separate \$250 check from each of those agencies, but won't get to keep the full \$500. They would have to pay back the extra \$250 when they file their tax return the following spring, just as people who received both payments in 2009 will have to pay back \$250 when they file their 2009 tax return.

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### **Bill Would Stop Medicare/TRICARE Cuts**

For the last several years, MOAA has invested considerable effort in pushing Congress to change the statutory formula that imposes ever-larger cuts in Medicare and TRICARE payments to physicians each year.

Congress has responded with a series of one-year fixes, but each annual fix simply "kicked the can" and imposed an even larger compounded payment cut the following year.

Unless current law is changed, Medicare and TRICARE payments will be cut 21% in January 2010 – which would devastate seniors' and military beneficiaries' health care access by deterring doctors from accepting them as patients. National health reform bills in both the House and Senate envisioned some form of doctor payment fix - either a permanent one or another one-year fix.

Now, Hill leaders have decided to strip the "doc fix" out of national health reform and address a permanent fix as stand-alone legislation.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow's "Medicare Physician Fairness Act" (S. 1776) is expected to come up for a vote in the Senate next week, perhaps as soon as Monday, Oct 19.

*See you next month.*



McHenry County Chapter  
P.O. Box 998 McHenry, IL 60051

Next Meeting  
Tuesday, October 22, 2009  
7:30 @ Woodstock AMVETS Post 269  
12320 Davis Road, Woodstock, IL 60098

McHenry County Chapter of VietNow Membership Application

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
SEVICE BRANCH \_\_\_\_\_ DATES OF DUTY (1957-CURRENT) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am an honorably discharged veteran and want to be a FULL MEMBER OF VietNow

\_\_\_\_\_ I am not a veteran but want to be an ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF VietNow

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Dues and Fees are \$15 annually renewable June 30<sup>th</sup>  
Veterans must enclose a copy of their DD214 form, which will be reviewed and returned.  
For a sum of ten (10) times the yearly dues, you can become a **LIFE MEMBER.**

Send with check payable to: **McHenry County Chapter of VietNow**  
Our Address is: **PO Box 998, McHenry, IL 60051**

