



# NEWS AND VIEWS

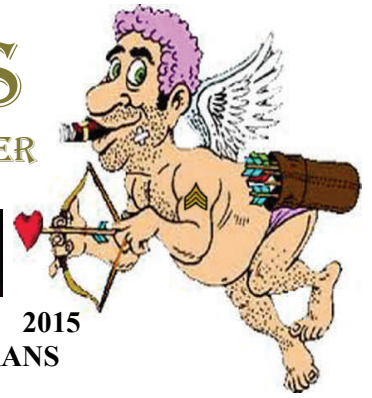
VVA # 223 - THE REDWOOD EMPIRE CHAPTER



Volume 17, Issue 1

FEBRUARY 2015

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH OTHER VETERANS



## CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

By Charles Earthman

'Twas early December and things were alright  
When veterans gathered one cold stormy night  
The turkeys were ready and desserts were all about  
There were presents for everyone, no one was left out  
Children of all ages were bright-eyed and amazed  
The garland and trimmings had been worked on all day  
This was our celebration we've waited all year  
Even Saint Nick himself was going to appear...



The 2014 Chapter Christmas Party was held December 5, 2014, and was the culmination and highlight of the Chapter's year. The Veterans Memorial Building Ballroom was where the Chapter played host to members, their families, and friends from near and far.

Decorating started early; Kate O'Hare-Palmer and more than 20 volunteers helped transform the ballroom into a merrily adorned hall full of holiday cheer. The large number of helpers made the set up and go quickly and relatively stress-free. There were more than 100 items donated for the raffle and the silent auction, which included some very nice items. Proceeds from the raffle and the silent auction go to the many programs and charities the Chapter supports throughout the year. (Cont'd on page 6)



## Circle 'N Squares Make a Generous Donation



Pictured from the left, Tom Woodard, Lou Nunez, and Evan Griffith at the presentation of a very generous gift from the Circle 'N Squares Western Square Dance Club of Santa Rosa to VVA-223.

The donation was a combination of money from the Circle 'N Squares (part of the money raised through Evan's *Dr. Toffee* candy sales last year), and private donations from Tom, GW, Ron and Patty. Many of the members of Circle 'N Squares are veterans. The club has a very nice website with pictures of activities and an events calendar. Check out their website at: [circlensquares.com](http://circlensquares.com)



Class of '68 Santa Rosa High School buddies, l to r, Richard Arney, Rich Marcucci and Jeff Rigard (VVA-223) reunite at the City Hall Flag Ceremony on Veterans Day back in November, years after losing contact.

**VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA - REDWOOD EMPIRE CHAPTER 223**  
**SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA**

**OFFICE: 707-526-4218 WEB: [www.vva223.org](http://www.vva223.org)**

**Officers**

President: Ken Holybee - [holybee@comcast.net](mailto:holybee@comcast.net) - Phone: 707.887.8891  
 Vice President: John McGivney - [mcgivney@pacbell.net](mailto:mcgivney@pacbell.net) - Phone: 707.575.5261  
 Secretary: Alan Dalton - [papadal@sbcglobal.net](mailto:papadal@sbcglobal.net) - Phone: 707.538.0428  
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**Board of Directors**

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 Brooke McKusick - [brookemckusick@gmail.com](mailto:brookemckusick@gmail.com) - Phone: 707.537.9003  
 Anthony Tate - [vetshelpingvets100@gmail.com](mailto:vetshelpingvets100@gmail.com) - Cell: 707.304.1163

**AVVA Representative**

Jil McGivney - [mcgivney@pacbell.net](mailto:mcgivney@pacbell.net) - Phone: 707.575.5261



**Women Veteran Committee Chair**  
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**California State Council**

***Kate O'Hare-Palmer***

[koharepalmer@gmail.com](mailto:koharepalmer@gmail.com)  
 Phone: 707-775-4123

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**Sonoma County Veterans Housing Advisory Committee**

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**News and Views**

Publisher:	Ken Holybee
Editor-in-Chief:	Brooke McKusick
Contributing Writers:	
Kate O'Hare-Palmer	Astrid Ortega
Bill Burke	Charles Earthman
Sunny Campbell	John Crooker
Advertising:	Lou Nunez
Photos by:	"McQ6"
Jil McGivney	Kate O'Hare-Palmer



**In Memoriam**  
**Stephen Michael**  
**Brown**

**Sept 8, 1950 - July 9, 2014**

**VVA 223 Member**

**NOTICE**

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of VVA, Inc., National, State, Chapter 223, or the newsletter staff, but of the corresponding party. All articles by the Chapter have permission for reprint in all Vietnam Veterans of America newsletters. Anything else must come from the original source.

To make a contribution to the News and Views, submit a story, or a photograph, please call or email: Brooke McKusick @ 537-9003, or [mcq6@vbn.com](mailto:mcq6@vbn.com). To make a complaint about the newsletter, please call: Ken Holybee @ 887-8891, or [holybee@comcast.net](mailto:holybee@comcast.net)

VVA Chapter 223 invites you to place an ad in the News and Views, please call:

Lou Nunez @ 291-5314 or Brooke McKusick @ 537-9003

A business card size ad in our newsletter is \$100.00 for a full year... With a 100% Tax Credit!

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# President's Letter



**Ken Holybee**

This is my first president's message of the new year. How many of us ever thought we would reach this milestone in our lives? [Huh? ed.]

The board of directors has been compiling a list of programs and projects that we are considering this year. Most of them are meetings, of one sort or another, that have to do with assisting veterans in our area and staying in contact with groups and committees throughout the state and country. We also have outreach programs and educational programs that we sponsor or support. When the list is complete, we will post it to the web page. We also have fundraising programs that we are working on and always looking for the easy way to fund our programs. With the list, we will be better able for all of our members to see and understand what we are doing in the community. We actually do more than most of us see.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Charles Earthman and Brooke McKusick for their work with the website and the newsletter in getting this information out. Our information does us no good if we are the only ones that know what it is.

One of our more pressing programs now is to get the cities of Petaluma and Santa Rosa to grant rides on the city buses to veterans using a VA card or a county ID card. There is always a cost to doing this that needs to be picked up somewhere. With the county system they will be able to track how many veterans ride the busses and on what routes as well as the times. Working with the community and the other veteran organizations there are ways to get federal money to offset these costs. Encouraging the cities to institute a pilot program would give us these numbers to assist in finding the resources to help offset these costs. A few words to the right people from our members would greatly assist in this effort. One of the comments at the county hearing to start their program was that giving free rides would help get the veterans to programs and events so they would not isolate as much. As we all know isolation, as much as we like it, is not healthy mentally or physically.

Our chapter elections are coming up in April. I know that it is still a couple of months away, but I would like **you** to think about running for the board. All board positions are open, and we always like new ideas and a different point of view. Our entire board should always be open to hear what you have to say. What I hear from our members I take to all levels of the organization as well as when I speak to legislators. Every voice counts and we always need to speak up for the minority.

I am asking all of our board members and committee chairs to submit articles to our newsletter. At the national level committee chairs, officers and regional directors are required to put articles in the "Veteran" on a regular basis. I would like to see more written reports of our activities.

We also have a national convention coming up this year. Our chapter is authorized five delegates to the convention. These delegates will elect our national board and give them direction for the next two years.

>>>>>

A very important piece of legislation died in committee in the last congress. The Toxic Exposure Act will be reintroduced this year. It will be the same bill as last year and hopefully we have answered the questions brought up that caused it to die. We all need to contact our congress members and Senators and tell them to be a sponsor and vote in favor of passage. If you remember last year I asked for everyone to encourage our legislators to support it, this year I would like to have everyone demand that they pass it.

I am looking forward to a great year.

*Ken Holybee*



## Michael Ottolini

### AMVETS POST 40

## Veterans Valentine

### Dinner and Dance

Invites Veterans, Family, and Friends to our  
Annual Fundraising Dinner and Dance

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**Dave Richey (707) 318-0542 Email: [midway65@sonic.net](mailto:midway65@sonic.net)**

Proceeds will benefit **The Pathway Home**  
and other veterans' programs

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## MOTLEY CRUE MEETS

A handful of VVA-223 members met with Brian McKeown and Matthew Jensen to talk about the newly emerging VFW. Brian and Matt are resurrecting the old VFW to serve all of the modern Desert War(s) veterans.

# Ready for Taxes?

by Bill Burke

*Disclaimer: Bill is 15 year Senior Tax Advisor with H&R Block. This article contains general information and should not be considered individual tax advice. Every person's tax situation is different and any specific information should be discussed with a tax professional.*



**Bill Burke**

Tax time is here once again and maybe it's time for a little refresher and an update on some of the new wrinkles in the tax code, especially with regard to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). One question that comes up is "How do I know if something is taxable?" The easiest way to know the answer is if you receive a document in the mail. If you get a document (W2, 1098x, 1099x, etc.) of some kind it's a pretty good bet that you need to do something with it and somehow show it on your tax return because the IRS also has a copy of the form.

We should all know by now that our VA Disability Benefits are non-reportable (they do not appear on the tax return) and non-taxable. Social Security (form 1099 SSA) is a little different however. Retirement, survivor, and disability payments maybe taxable depending on if you have enough other income to trigger the threshold. Take all of your other reportable income (wages, interest, dividends, pensions, etc.) and 50% of your social security gross amount and add them together. If the total is over \$25,000 for single people or over \$32,000 for married people then up to 85% of your Social Security is potentially taxable. Supplemental Security Income on the other hand is not taxable. There is some good news however. The State of California does not tax social security at all so it is subtracted from the CA tax return.

Unemployment compensation is treated similar to social security. Unemployment compensation is fully taxable on your federal tax return but is not taxable to California, so it is also subtracted from the CA tax return. State Disability Insurance (SDI) payments are not reportable or taxable on either the federal or state return and you don't receive a form for this type of payment either. Like SDI, workers compensation benefits paid for an on-the-job accident is not reportable or taxable.

So we have figured out what goes on our tax return and the next question is "Do I have to file a tax return?:". This one is a little more complicated in that there are a lot of things that can trigger the necessity to file a tax return including the new stuff in the Affordable Care Act.

(Cont'd on page 8)



## Introduction to Diabetes Type 2

*by Astrid Ortega*



**Astrid Ortega**

Hearing the diagnosis "You have type 2 Diabetes" is always a big shock and a surprise to most people. Did you know that 29 Million Americans have this type of Diabetes. The Ratio is 1 in 4 of Americans 65 and older have Diabetes type 2. It is a condition with an annual cost of 245 billion dollars in medical care and lost wages.

Diabetes may affect almost every part of your life, but there are many NEW ways to manage it.

Diabetes does not have to control your life. You can control your Diabetes. With help you can discover ways to care for yourself and control those blood sugars. Good nutrition does not mean a rigid diet but knowledge about what is healthy for you to eat adds another armament in controlling blood sugars.

Other factors in good control are mild exercise ( walking 1/2 hour a day), lowering stressors in your life, making sure you have a normal blood pressure and cholesterol count, and this can be accomplished with appropriate medications. Taking a class or talking to a Diabetes Educator can add many years to your life. Avoiding future complications are what you and your health providers are driving to achieve.

Being sedentary and overweight increase the odds of developing Diabetes 2, but your genetic determination and ethnic background also play a large part in determining if you are at risk. Thin people can develop Diabetes as can young people even teen agers. Movie star Tom Hanks , sports figures Dominique Wilkins, Billie Jean King, chefs Paula Deen all have type 2 Diabetes.

Your risks increase with age but it is never too late to make some changes and develop healthy habits.

Diabetes is a complicated condition that is why there has been no discovery how to cure it.

Right now the Chinese population has the fastest growing rate of Diabetes , and I am sure you can guess why. If you are Hispanic you are at higher risk, as well as recent immigrants to the USA that eat our type of fast food diet.

(Cont'd on page 8)



## Redwood Empire Chapter Kicks Off a New Scholarship Season

by Sunny Campbell

Every January, VVA-223 sends out scholarship applications to all the high schools in Sonoma County, plus Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa Junior College and Empire College. The funding for these scholarships comes from the efforts and fund raising of all of the members of VVA-223 throughout the year.

The scholarship forms get mailed to the scholarship coordinators of the respective schools in our county. The requirements for the high school and college students are that they are a child or a grandchild of a Vietnam Era Vet. The applicants will be graded on grade point average, academics, community service, and a 500 word essay on, "What effect did my parent's or grandparent's military service have on my life."

There is a category for college students who have recently served in the military in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. They will also be graded on academics, grade point average, and will need to provide a 500 word essay on, "What effect did my military service have on my life."

Last year we presented 5 scholarships for a total of \$3,000,000.

The awards will be presented on May 19, 2015 at 7:15 PM at the Veterans Building in Santa Rosa. Parents and family members are welcome to attend the awards presentation.

We will have applications available to VVA-223 members who would like to give an application to any of their children or grandchildren that meet the above requirements. You can contact Sunny Campbell at 707-849-4399. VVA-223 members can also receive an application at our monthly meetings, the third Tuesday of the month.

Applicants must return their applications no later than May 1st, to CA Campbell, 2163 Alejandro Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95405.



Sunny Campbell

## HEALDSBURG SOS SENDS PACKAGES TO THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CAV

by Kate O'Hare-Palmer

On Thursday evening, January 15, 2015, Healdsburg SOS gathered in the gym at St. John's School in Healdsburg. Mary St Claire, complete with a white hard hat, directed the packing of supplies and homemade goodies for this round of soldiers in Afghanistan. Since the 4<sup>th</sup> Inf. Is no longer overseas, the call for care packages from the Family Readiness office at Ft. Carson was for support of the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV out of Ft. Hood Texas. There were valentines to write and pictures from St. John's elementary school included in the boxes. The Bombshell Girls, many veteran service organization members, and all the dedicated Healdsburg residents were there to help. The Redwood Empire VVA-223 is helping with the shipping costs.



Ken Holybee, Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Earl Walters, Ron Brockmam, and Charles Earthman helped fill boxes to be sent to the 1st CAV at the Healdsburg SOS.

We listened to a skype message from Sgt. Barber, from Ft. Carson, who has received our care packages in years past. He reinforced how grateful his men and women were to receive all the packages. These gifts and the thoughts behind them are so precious to the troops.

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**We offer a one-stop veteran's resource for everything a veteran may need in the way of finding benefits and advice. We have assistance with VA benefits, shelter for the homeless veterans or near homeless. When we find a home for a veteran, we have a furniture donation program so when we get a home for a veteran we supply them with basic needs. Check our web site for more information: [vet-connect.org](http://vet-connect.org)**

**We help an average of 35 veterans weekly, some are there for follow-up and some are new. We are funded by donations and grants, all of the money goes to helping veterans. We have NO paid personal except an accountant.**

**We just had a board election. The new officers and Board of Directors are: President: Richard Jones, Vice President: Dave Kistenmacher, Treasurer: John Crooker, and Secretary: Dave Phillips. Board Members: Jim Poore, David Skujan, George Thompson, Fred Beeler, and Harold Goldman.**

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### Sonoma County Vet Connect Inc. Update

By John Crooker

Sonoma County Vet Connect Inc., SCVC, is a part of Sonoma Counties Continuum of Care and charged with ending veteran homeless in Sonoma County. We are made up of veterans, many of who are members of VVA-223 and other groups in Sonoma County. We invite the rest of you who want to make a difference in veteran's lives to contact us. We have an outreach program every Tuesday from 9am to Noon, or 0900 to 1200h, please feel free to stop by for some of JJ Wheeler's coffee and donuts, that way you can see firsthand what we do for our veterans. >>>>>



(Cont'd from page 1)

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

There was a steady flow of veterans, families, and friends arriving for the 6pm start of festivities. The atmosphere was cheerful and there were lots of wide-eyed children eagerly anticipating a visit from Santa. The room was full of merriment as dinner was served buffet style.

As dinner was winding down I was told to announce the guest of honor. Excited cheers greeted Santa as he entered escorted by his elves. Santa took his traditional place in his chair next to a table full of presents. The air was charged with excitement as children lined up to tell Santa their Christmas wishes and get a gift presented by the elves. All the children were seen by Santa and they each received a present. The gift giving by Santa was the highlight of a very delightful evening and a Christmas tradition for the Redwood Empire Chapter.

The raffle and silent auction followed Santa to finish off the evening. Calling out the numbers for the raffle took a long time because of so many prizes. But we did get through the evening and participants went away with nice gifts including some very nice Christmas trees.

**As the evening drew to an end, and all had had fun. We were satisfied and happy at what we had done.**

**Another year of giving and working for vets is a blessing for our Chapter we should never forget!**









## Taxes

In general, if your gross income is over \$11,700 (if you're single and over 65) or over \$22,700 (if you're married and over 65) you'll need to file that return. If you are under 65 the thresholds are somewhat less.

Now that we got the easy stuff down, it's time for the ACA. The Affordable Care Act requires that all of us have medical insurance. Fortunately for most of us both Medicare and the VA medical system qualify us for the minimal essential coverage and allow us to avoid paying any penalties. But what about the rest of our tax families (all the people listed on our tax return)? When filing your 2014 tax return you will have to answer some questions about your health care coverage. The ACA has two mandates associated with it. One is the employer mandate that goes into effect in 2015. If you are still working and the people listed on the tax return are all covered through your employer all you have to do is self certify (no forms received) that everyone is covered.

The other mandate is the individual mandate and is the nightmare. In California this means you got your health coverage through Covered California. If everyone does not have health coverage that person owes a penalty which is added to your federal tax return. Most of you probably heard the penalty is only \$95. This is not true. It is \$95 (per person) or 1% of your income above the filing threshold whichever is higher. You can go to IRS.GOV to get some info on how to handle this fairly complex calculation. You owe 1/12th of the amount for each month of 2014 that someone was not covered.

How do you know if you are covered? Covered California will send you a form (1095A) showing every month that you were covered. There are multiple exemptions to paying the penalty based on hardship or having no more than 2 months without coverage. If you have questions about exemptions you may need to contact a tax professional to give you a hand.

Another component of the individual mandate is the Premium Tax Credit (PTC). This is known as a subsidy that may have been paid to you or directly to the insurance company. In either case, if you received a PTC, you must file a tax return (no matter what) to settle up to see if you get additional monies or need to pay some of it back because your actual income changed from the estimate you used when you got your health care coverage. Again, that pesky form 1095A should have this information on it.

That's about it for now and good luck.

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Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

## Diabetes Type 2

But what actually happens with Diabetes Type 2? When your liver and pancreas are working together, your Insulin levels match the amount of sugars (carbohydrates) needed by your cells. As your pancreas begins to fail there is a surplus of sugar called glycogen. The liver also plays a large role in controlling blood sugars and releases sugar into the blood stream from the foods that you eat. Diet and diabetes medications aid in that process. That is why it is important that you have glucose monitoring skills and every DM2 should be taught how to monitor their own blood sugars, with a glucose meter.

There are signs and symptoms of DM2, frequent urination, excessive thirst, weight loss, tiredness, blurry vision after a meal, but sometimes there are no signs and symptoms. If you start feeling some or part of these symptoms it is best you see your health provider and have a fasting glucose test and get some medical attention. It is a condition that can be monitored and controlled but you will have to be a willing participant in your own health process.

The American Diabetes Association is a wonderful resource of information: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

I hope to continue to write about this condition in the future. If you see me at a VVA meeting feel free to ask me questions I am a Certified Diabetes Educator, now retired but willing to give advice for FREE.

\* \* \* \* \*

*A few personal notes about Astrid Ortega, FNP/CDE Retired :*

Astrid joined the Army Nurse Corps as a student nurse in 1965. She went on active duty in 1966 after she graduated and got her RN. She was stationed for one year at the Presidio in San Francisco, CA. Astrid received orders for Viet Nam in August of 1967, where she served at the 36th Evacuation Hospital in Vung Tau, Viet Nam, in a surgical orthopedic ward.

She also cared for civilians, women and children burned by Napalm. At that time, she was promoted to a 1st Lieutenant. Astrid left Viet Nam in August of 1968.

*Astrid writes:*

*My family, "the Ortegas," are very patriotic. My father and an uncle, both Medical Doctors, served during the Korean War. My brother, Victor Ortega, served during the Viet Nam War. He has a Purple Heart and several medals of Valor. My youngest brother, Kenneth Ortega MD, served as an Orthopedic Surgeon in the Army Medical Corps during the Persian Gulf War.*

*My family immigrated to the USA in 1949. This may be too much information, but I am a proud American of Hispanic heritage.*





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# SONOMA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

## SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT

**Veterans Drop In Center  
for FREE Resources & Services  
Every Tuesday - 9 am to noon**

Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building  
1351 Maple Avenue, Santa Rosa  
(Across from the Fair Grounds)

Information, Assistance and Referrals  
VA Health Care, Veterans Benefits - Counseling for  
Veterans and their Families, Housing  
And Employment Counseling

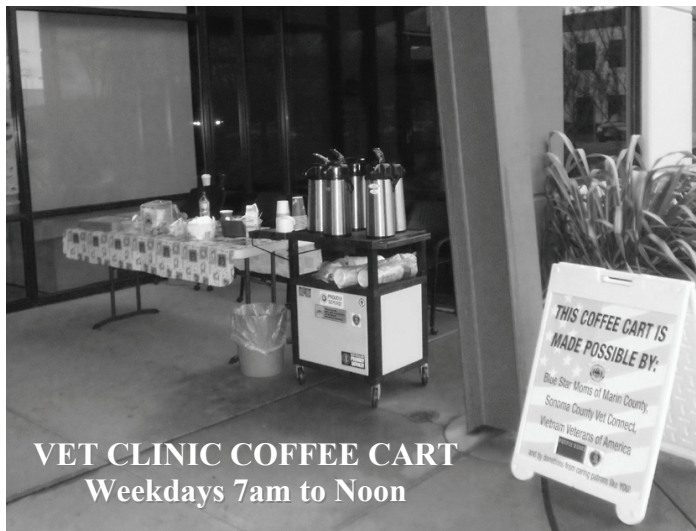
**Phone 707-387-5623**

These services are, also, available at the Veterans Memorial Buildings in **Guerneville** on the 2nd Thursday, **Sonoma** on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Please note the time schedule for these resource and service meetings is: Noon to 3 pm

**ALL VETERANS ARE WELCOME  
NO CHARGE SERVICE**

## FREE BUS RIDES FOR VETERANS

For 2015, veterans and college students in Sonoma County will be able to ride **Sonoma County Transit** buses free of charge. The program went into effect Jan. 1. Students and veterans just need to show a valid identification card to ride.



What's missing from this picture? You are... Although there are many volunteers working at the Vet Clinic coffee cart, there is always a need for more help. It's fun to serve other vets, and get the chance to meet interesting people.

If you would like to help out in the mornings please call Lou Nunez at 291-5314 or Earl Walters at 477-4567.

## NORTH BAY VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

200 Montgomery Drive, Suite "C"  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402  
**Phone 707-578-8387**

NBVRC provides supportive services to very low-income veteran families living in, or transitioning into, permanent housing. The employment workshop is free. Veterans can obtain career training.

NBVRC operates Hearn House, a behavioral health treatment program that provides comprehensive treatment and housing for male veterans.

## SONOMA COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE (707) 565.5960

3725 Westwind Blvd, Suite 101  
Santa Rosa CA 95409

Westwind Boulevard is located near the Charles M. Schulz (Sonoma County) Airport. From Highway 101: Exit Airport Boulevard, turn left on Westwind Blvd. and right into the building's parking lot. Check Sonoma County Transit Airport route 62 & 64 for bus schedule.

P. O. Box 4059, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

*Please call to schedule an appointment.*



**Visit the VVA 223 Website often for timely  
updates and chapter information...**

**<http://www.vva-223.org>**





## **CHAPTER 223 GENERAL MEETING FEBRUARY 17, 2015 BE THERE EARLY!!!**

**REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION -  
HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM** - Every  
Monday evening @ 5:30 pm. **101 6th Street, Santa  
Rosa.**

**SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT -**  
Every Tuesday morning, 9:00 am to noon @ the  
VETS building. Vets helping vets solve problems.

**VETERANS DROP-IN GROUP** - Every  
Tuesday @ high noon in the North Room of the VETS  
building. All veterans are welcome.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING -**  
Second Tuesday of the month, 1:00 pm @ the VETS  
building. Look for the guys looking for the room...

**VVA-223 GENERAL MEETING** - Third  
Tuesday of the month. **POTLUCK @ SIX.** & Meet-  
ing starts at 7 PM. See above...

**FOOD-GIVE-AWAY PROGRAM** - Fourth  
Tuesday of the month. Volunteers will please check in  
with **John McGivney @ 575.5261** for time and sta-  
tion.

**POKER SCHEDULE** - Cards in the air at  
6:00 pm. Check-in and pizza 5:00 to 5:55 pm...  
Usually the first Saturday of the month... **FEB 7th**

# **COMIC'S CORNER**

"According to a new survey, Europeans drink more  
than anyone else in the world. When I heard that I said to my-  
self: Can't we do anything anymore?" -- Dave Letterman

The hardest job that a kid can face today is learning  
manners without seeing any...

"Thank you for calling the Ritz Hotel. How may I help  
you?"

"How much for a room for the night?"

"Our rates depend on the size of the room, sir, the number of  
people and the view."

"Do you accept children?"

"No sir, just American Express, MasterCard and Visa."

"In pop culture news, Lady Gaga got married. And yes,  
she was wearing white meat." -- Dave Letterman

"Google has developed image-recognition software that  
can accurately capture what's happening in a photo. But it still  
has some bugs. It described Kim Kardashian's recent photo as  
'Woman being chased by two Butterball turkeys.'" -- Jimmy  
Fallon

"Some people are mad over the Discovery Channel's  
'Eaten Alive' special about a man getting eaten by an ana-  
conda because the snake didn't completely swallow him. This  
proves there are two things America will not stand for: false  
advertising and portion control." -- Conan O'Brien

"The odds of going to the store for a loaf of bread and  
coming out with only a loaf of bread are three billion to one."  
-- Erma Bombeck

For decades now, newspaper readership has been stead-  
ily going down. A major reason is that young people don't  
read newspapers. Young people either don't care about news  
or prefer to get their news from alternative sources such as the  
Internet, TV, cell phones, cereal boxes, skywriting and other  
people's tattoos.

"TSA Chief John Pistole announced that he is stepping  
down. So whoever takes his place is going to have some  
pretty big shoes to take off." -- Jimmy Fallon

"As of today, Starbucks will allow their employees to  
display tattoos and ear gauges. Those are the round plugs that  
some people put in their ear lobe to let the world know their  
dads never played catch with them." -- Jimmy Kimmel



## **VVA 223 PHOTOGRAPHS**

on SHUTTERFLY

<http://vva223photographs.shutterfly.com>



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### *News and Views*

Volume 17, Issue 1 FEBRUARY 2015

A Publication of:  
**Vietnam Veterans of America**  
**The Redwood Empire Chapter 223**  
1351 Maple Avenue  
PO Box 1583  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

OFFICE: 707-526-4218  
WEB: [www.vva223.org](http://www.vva223.org)

## **ADDENDUM TO THE CHRISTMAS PARTY STORY ON PAGE ONE**



Some of Santa's helpers stopped by the Vet building to wrap gifts for the children attending the Christmas party given by the Redwood Empire Chapter VVA 223. Pictured from the left, front row are: Chris Escalante, Brittany Escalante, Jackie Richey, Jeanne Aven, Shirley Dalton, Jil McGivney and Anne Castellon. And in the back row, from the left: Brandon Stewart, Kate O'Hare Palmer, Dave Richey, Lois Stewart, and Robin Taylor. As a wonderful contribution to the Christmas party, this event was organized by our own AVVA president Jil McGivney.