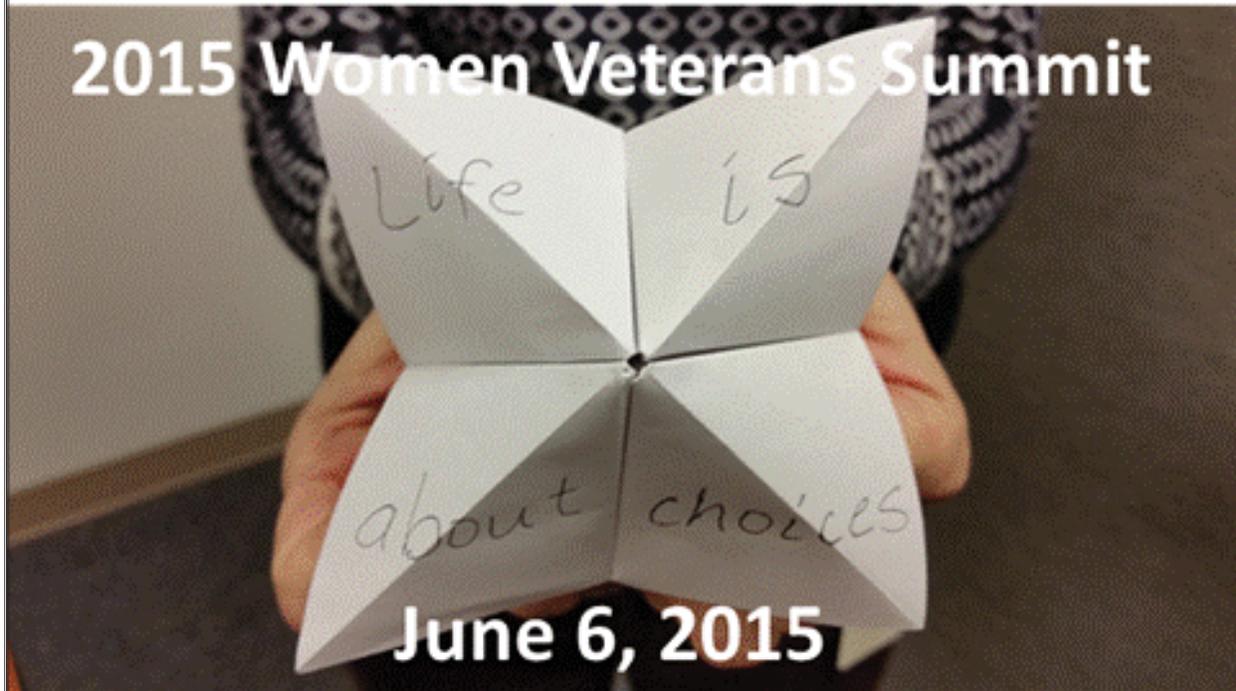


*Call 1-800-562-2308 for Statewide Assistance*

*March/April 2015*

**The Washington State  
Department of Veterans Affairs and the  
WestCare Foundation present**

**2015 Women Veterans Summit**



**June 6, 2015**

**Three Rivers Convention Center  
7016 West Grandridge Boulevard  
Kennewick, WA 99336**

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and the WestCare Foundation would like to invite all women who served in the military, National Guard and Reserve, and Transitioning Military of all ages to come for a FREE day of information, pampering, lunch, a runway show featuring women Veterans, and some special guest presenters.

Registration is now open at:

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/women/women-veterans-summit>



# A Note from the Director

Lourdes E. Alvarado-Ramos (Alfie)

[alfie@dva.wa.gov](mailto:alfie@dva.wa.gov)

WDVA is very excited to be partnering with the Washington Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC) and the Washington Department of Health (DOH) on a new awareness initiative called “Have You Ever Served in the Military?”!

## Why is asking this simple question so important to our veterans and their families?

Only 20 percent of the 602,000 Washington state military veterans get care at VA Medical centers, which means at least 480,000 of them are getting their care at clinics, hospitals and other organizations in our communities...or not at all.

## Why Nurses?

Nurses, healthcare’s equivalent to the boots on the ground, are uniquely positioned to facilitate this fundamental change of ensuring vital information is obtained and recorded in order to improve the quality of healthcare provided to our veterans and their families. We need to take this message broadly and deeply into our communities, especially in our most rural areas.

## How can this happen?

Nurses and other healthcare providers are being provided with a [pocket card](#) listing the most common health concerns linked to military service, as well as questions the provider should ask the veteran. This information will help providers obtain a more complete military service history and identify possible health factors or illnesses related to such service.

The NCQAC dedicated their bi-annual newsletter to this campaign, providing much more detailed information, and I encourage you to [download a copy](#), and then pass that copy on to your neighbor, medical facility, at your local community meeting hall or anywhere Washington’s Veterans and Families gather!

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/669256-Winter2015.pdf>

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/sites/default/files/FinalPocketCard.pdf>



*Kicking off “Have You Ever Served” campaign at the Capitol: (l-r) Nursing Consultant Advisor, HSQA - Anne Schuchmann; WDVA Director of Nursing - Linda McKinney; WDVA director - Alfie Alvarado-Ramos; Department of Health secretary - John Wiesman; Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission chair - Suellyn Masek.*

## Ronald Bergstrom Joins WDVA as Washington Veterans Home Superintendent



The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs is proud to announce the appointment of Ronald Bergstrom as Superintendent of the Washington Veterans Home in Retsil.

Ron brings with him a tremendous amount of experience as an Air Force veteran and a leader. His extensive experience in long-term care includes serving as Executive Director, Health Center Administrator, and Compliance Officer at various facilities covering a number of states, before settling here in Washington.

“We selected the right person to continue the very important work of caring for our most vulnerable veterans while providing leadership to our resilient staff,” said WDVA Deputy Director Gary Condra.

He replaces Dax Dowling, who served as Interim Superintendent for 11 months. Dowling will resume his full-time duties as Associate Superintendent for the Washington Veterans Home.

For additional information concerning the Washington Veterans Home, visit <http://www.dva.wa.gov/> or call (360) 895-4700. Bergstrom can be reached at [Ronaldb@dva.wa.gov](mailto:Ronaldb@dva.wa.gov).



**2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGAN  
JANUARY 12, 2015**

Bills of interest to veterans and their families are listed on our website at <http://www.dva.wa.gov/about-wdva/legislative-updates>

To receive weekly email alerts on the status of bills impacting veterans and their families.,  
sign up here:

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=wdva&A=1>



*Thanks to Representative Gina McCabe and Governor Inslee, several WA State agencies will kick-off a campaign encouraging employers to commit to hiring veterans!*

*2SHB 2040 was signed April 22, 2015, so stay tuned to find out how employers can pledge their hiring commitments!*



**2015**  
Tools for Recovery

## Memorial Day Tool Drive

**TAHOMA High School Parking Lot  
18200 Se 240th St, Kent, WA 98042  
Monday, May 25  
10 am - 2 pm**

Honor a veteran and help conservation in your community by donating new or used tools to support outdoor therapies through the Veterans Conservation Corps at 21 Acres in Woodinville and Soldier's Home in Orting.

**Immediate Need**

- Shovels
- Wheelbarrows
- Rock Rakes
- Watering Cans/Hoses
- Hoes
- Gloves
- Seeds
- Clippers/Pruning Tools
- Garden Supply Store Cards

Thank You for Your Donation

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS "Serving Those Who Served"

For More Information Contact:  
Melissa Lang (KCD) 206-778-8235  
Jeremy Grisham (VCC) 206.402.1977  
Jason Alves (VCC) 360-742-8789

KCD King Conservation District



## VA Expands Choice Program Eligibility, effective April 24, 2015

“VA is pleased to announce the distance calculation change from straight-line to driving distance for the Veterans Choice Program,” said Secretary Robert McDonald. “This update to the program will allow more Veterans to access care when and where they want it. We look forward to continued dialogue with Veterans and our partners to help us ensure continued improvements for Veterans’ to access care.”

The change from straight-line to driving distance roughly doubles the number of eligible Veterans. Letters are being sent to the newly eligible Veterans to let them know they are now eligible for the Veterans Choice Program under this expansion. If a Veteran does not remember receiving a Veterans Choice Card or has other questions about the Choice Program, they can call (866) 606-8198.

Effective immediately, VA is also changing the mileage calculation for beneficiary travel. The change will ensure consistency in VA’s mileage calculations across the two programs. The beneficiary travel calculation will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route.

## National Moment of Remembrance 3:00 pm May 25, 2015

*Veterans 2015 Summit at Swinomish included Intergovernmental site visit*

*David M. Montoya, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, speaking during April’s intergovernmental site visit with the Suquamish, Lower Elwha, and Puyallup Tribes, hosted by the Suquamish Tribe.*

*Agenda topics included VA Tribal Health Care Reimbursements MOUs, VA Native American Direct Home Loan Program, HUD-VASH voucher demonstration program for Native Veterans and State services for veterans and families.*



## Washington State Military Transition Council

WDVA helps make transitions smoother

Reprint from Northwest Military

By [Gary Lott](#)

Servicemembers sometimes have difficulty finding gainful employment when they transition from active duty to the civilian workforce. But a program put in place by the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is working to make that transition smoother and more successful.

“These men and women have put their lives on hold to serve their country, and as they leave military service, we can either ignore the handoff from military to civilian, or we can embrace it,” said WDVA director Alfie Alvarado-Ramos.

According to Alvarado-Ramos, the state of Washington hired more than 400 veterans into state agencies last year and formed the Veterans Employee Resource Group to help retain these valuable employees.

In 2011, the state created the Washington State Military Transition Council (WSMTC), which focuses on creating enduring partnerships between public and private organizations, enabling servicemembers to transition into civilian employment and various career opportunities in Washington with success.

When it began, only 18 percent of veterans leaving the military reported having civilian sector jobs.

“To embrace it, our communities, corporations, not for profits, everyone must be a part of a coordinated effort to handle this transition and make it as seamless as possible,” Alvarado-Ramos

*Continued on page 6*



*On February 24, Washington State was honored in Washington DC as a Pillar of Excellence by VA Secretary Bob McDonald for the services we provide to our service members in transition.*

*The incredible work that takes place between your WDVA and our JBLM, military, corporate, not for profit and Veterans Services Organization partners is a national best practice.*

*We have a lot of people who have broken through the silos and given of themselves and their organizations in order to take a community approach at a community issue, the successful transition our service members and their families.*

*Continued from page 5*  
*Washington State Military Transition Council*

said. “That effort will be what diminishes or removes unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, incarceration, all the stumbling blocks to these men and women calling Washington state their home.”

Thanks in part to WSMTC, that 18 percent in 2011 more than doubled by 2014, with 42 percent of transitioning servicemembers now reporting to have civilian jobs waiting for them.

“We now have five different trades on base providing in-house apprenticeships, which are leading to family wage jobs after active duty,” Alvarado-Ramos said.

Constantly implementing new strategies, such as those apprenticeships, to employ servicemembers allows the Military Transition Council to keep evolving.

“We want to galvanize communities to form relationships, leave their silos and to be aware of the wealth of resources available to welcome these veterans back into their communities,” she said.

Alvarado-Ramos isn’t just referring to the JBLM-neighboring communities.

The March quarterly meeting was the first time the WSMTC met east of the Snoqualmie Pass, with the meeting taking place at the Yakima National Guard Armory.

This presented the opportunity for Spokane Area Veteran Task Force updates as well as a Yakima Area Veteran Task Force update.

Transitional issues and concerns in these areas are understandably much different than the concerns coming from the JBLM area, which has a high level of support.

The Washington National Guard has been an instrumental part of the Military Transition Council from the beginning.

The Guard’s Director of Manpower and Personnel, Col. Kevin McMahan, has been a panel member at the council meeting since the start.

“The Washington National Guard may be geographically separated throughout the state when compared to the active duty, but that doesn’t make our focus on transition any different,” McMahan said. “We rely on our various connections and local outreach to maintain the Guard’s emphasis on transition, which in turn provides many opportunities for our guardsmen to further their employment education.”

The transition council’s model isn’t just something that is being noticed in Washington state.

“Washington state leads the nation in results and efforts on this issue,” Alvarado-Ramos said. “The Department of Defense has really stepped up to make these transitions more seamless, and we have higher commands coming here to look at what we are doing and using it as a model.”

Although the WSMTC has been a constantly growing and learning experience, its level of success demonstrates that by working together and combining efforts, Washington state can remain the leader in military transition.





## Washington Veterans Homes

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/veteran-homes/veterans-homes>



## Next Step Housing Welcomes American Veterans



Next Step Housing (NSH) completed Pear Tree Place (PTP) in Yakima last April adding a Community Clubhouse to the existing 72 studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartment homes. The final phase focused on providing service-enriched, brand new construction to 18 veteran households, mostly single adults plus families with children. Residents served stateside and in Europe during WWII as well as tours in Panama, Kosovo, Korea, the Philippines and Viet Nam. PTP veterans also include recent returnees from active duty in Iraq and

Afghanistan.

PTP is the very first permanent housing for veterans in all of Central Washington. Diana McClaskey, NSH's Deputy Director, successfully preleased all units and acts as the community's Resident Manager. The complex was the very first green and sustainable design and construction in all of Yakima County. Operations support includes annual funding from the HUD McKinney Homeless Program for eight chronically homeless and disabled vets as well as another eight project-based VASH vouchers in partnership with the Yakima Housing Authority and HUD's Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing Program. This new subdivision resolved 43% of the Yakima homeless veteran problem at once.

Most veterans have stabilized working with the NSH's On-Site Case Manager, Rigoberto Dominguez. Local volunteers including Brian and Tammy Winter, the Blue Mountain Action Council and the Yakima VFW helped

furnish all households with everything they needed from beds to tv's to linens and kitchenware. They also provided all residents with gift baskets during the holidays. Yakima Neighborhood Health Services paid for many of the vets' security deposits and first month's rent.

One young husband and new father, Isidro Mendoza, served in Iraq and was hired by NSH to work on the construction of the development. He and his family were eligible for a two-bedroom townhome so Ms. McClaskey showed him their new apartment. She let him know, "The reason you are getting this new home is because of your service to our country." His response was, "Well...this makes it all worth it"

Diana McClaskey ~ 509-249-0390



**Building 9  
for  
Veterans**

Transitional Housing  
Program

"Serving Those Who Served"

DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL & COMMUNITY  
SERVICES  
VETERANS  
AFFAIRS

1-800-562-2308  
www.dva.wa.gov

*"The key component that we can give veterans and their families is hope.*

*It doesn't cost us anything, we don't have to start a new program.*

*We connect with them and we give them hope for the future."*

*Ray Switzer, Building 9 Project Manager*

*307 veterans have been through bldg 9, including  
31 women veterans.*

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/veteran-homes/building-9-veterans-transitional-housing-program>



**Washington Veterans Home Resident is Proud Seabee!**

Seabee Thurman Fletcher was honored March 7 at the 2015 Anniversary Ball, marking the 173rd anniversary of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, 148th of the Civil Engineer Corps, and 73rd of the Seabees.

‘Fletch’ joined the 38<sup>th</sup> Navy CB’s in 1942 and served in the Aleutian Islands setting up runways for B29s to deliver supplies. “There were Japanese snipers but mostly you had to worry about them stealing food, they had been left with no supplies and were unprepared for the hard Alaska winter,” said Fletch. The 38<sup>th</sup> then moved on to the Marianas Islands where on Tinian Island they did the same job of laying runways but in a very different climate and environment. On Tinian the Japanese snipers were active and would pick men off in the cane fields. Fletch discharged from the Navy in 1946. He married Dorothy Mae in 1951 and they have 3 children. He spent the next 30 years serving his country in the Bremerton shipyards as a crane operator.

Today, Fletch is a beloved resident at the Washington Veterans Home in Retsil and loves to share his experiences with others.

Share *your* Memorial Day Events  
<http://www.dva.wa.gov/calendar>

Send fliers and information to  
[communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)



*WDVA’s Alfie Alvarado-Ramos and Jennifer Montgomery - Outreach to Washington Veteran Owned Businesses. Are you Registered?*

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/program/business-registry>

*Thank You!*



*Members of the Spokane El Katif Shrine “Legion of Honor” Honor Guard are as follows: Left To Right. Bob McVicker, Duane Herman, Ed Weber, Gene Lane, Roger Gehrig, Howard Wynia and Tom Hart.*

## Who and Why are Gold Star Wives?



### Who we are:

- The widows/widowers whose spouses died while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, or as result of service-connected disabilities.
- The widows/widowers of service personnel of all armed conflicts involving the United States of America.
- The mothers and fathers of children whose parents gave their life in the service of the country.
- The widows/widowers of service personnel of all ranks, races, and creeds.

### Why we are:

“Only a service spouse understands the sorrow and problems of another service spouse.”

We believe surviving spouses and dependent children need an organization dedicated solely to their needs, concerns, and welfare.

We believe that United we are stronger, and that together we stand and divided we fall and are forgotten.

As of 2010 there are over 10,000 members among 60 chapters. Besides offering comfort and support, the Gold Star Wives help their fellow members navigate the benefits system while also legislating for improved benefits.

The Tahoma Chapter is Washington State’s only Gold Star Wives chapter. Chapter president Arlene Murray (photo above) says they spend lots of time reaching out through networking efforts.

“We are partners with DOD in the Vietnam 50th Commemorative Program and have personally thanked and “pinned” more than 1250 Vietnam veterans here in Washington,” said Murray. “Members volunteer at VA hospitals, the Soldiers Home, churches, schools and a number of veteran events throughout the year. We are strong surviving women from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds.”

Although initially formed by women, the Gold Star Wives know women also pay the ultimate price and welcome widowers whose spouse was killed in action.

“We welcome all widows and widowers to join us as we give back to our military and Veterans with appreciation and pride,” says Murray. For more information, please contact Arlene Murray at [a.murray2293@gmail.com](mailto:a.murray2293@gmail.com) or 253-720-1766.

The Tahoma Chapter meets the third Saturday of every month at 5717 South Tyler St. in Tacoma at 10 am, except during the summer months.

*The history of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 51, Spokane, Washington, dates back to 1911. In that year, veterans of the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War began work leading up to the establishment of John R. Monaghan Post 51 securing it with a charter on April 13, 1915. There were 65 original charter members of our Post.*

*Fred Green Commander Veterans of Foreign Wars State of Washington presents the Century Certificate to the 100th Commander of Ensign John R. Monaghan Post 51 Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 51 Commander Andy Patrick.*





**RallyPoint/6; Who We Are:** A team entirely comprised of prior-service and military family members committed to connecting real-time, barrier free, outcome-based resources for those who have served. By utilizing innovative programming, and national networks at no-cost for the Veterans and their families we are able to facilitate a smooth landing in their next life's mission.

**What We Do:** RP/6's culturally competent staff and its partners stand ready to assess, convene, and connect, Service members, Veterans and their Families to new and existing services in the community that best meet their individual objectives on their path forward. RP/6 has worked diligently to establish a Coordinated Network of public and private service providers that drives efficiency, reduces duplication and coordinates connections to resources and services. RP/6 currently includes a network made up of over 100 local and national providers from public and private sectors working together through the auspices of a community convening location connected to a larger local and national network ensuring the service members seamless reintegration. RP/6 is committed to developing a unique answer to better-serving our clients by designing a collaborative solution while remaining mindful of the unique characteristics and needs of veterans, military families and the communities we support. RP/6 provides a "no-wrong door" approach in connecting resources and services to transitioning service members, veterans of all generations, and their families as they move to and lead our community's nation-wide. The core service areas of focus are; Employment, Education, Benefits, Housing, Family Programs, Finance and Legal, Wellness and Volunteerism.

Our **SCOUT Program** is comprised of culturally competent leaders with prior military experience dedicated to working with clients through consultative analysis, action planning, and consistent follow-up. Our proven methodology is based upon several best-in-class case management frameworks and RP/6's solid track record of delivery. Below are the steps the Scouts follow to assist clients on their path forward.

1. **INTAKE** – Triage each individual situation based upon a series of standardized questions and best-practices as part of a cloud-based in-processing system.
2. **ASSESS** – Develop a personalized action plan with "SMART" Specific, Measureable, Actionable, Results-Oriented, & Timely Goals. Verify eligibility of resources available and the best service options for the client's needs.
3. **REFER** - Connect the client with the right partner organization amongst the RP/6 coordinated network; a multi-disciplined ecosystem to assist them in reaching their goal.
4. **GUIDE** – Track the client's progress towards their goal and check-in frequently to ensure they are progressing towards their objective. Track advancement and request feedback often. Provide additional resources and tools throughout the experience.
5. **MEASURE** –Ensure we are using the best and most promising practices to achieve success for each service member, veteran and military family member we serve.

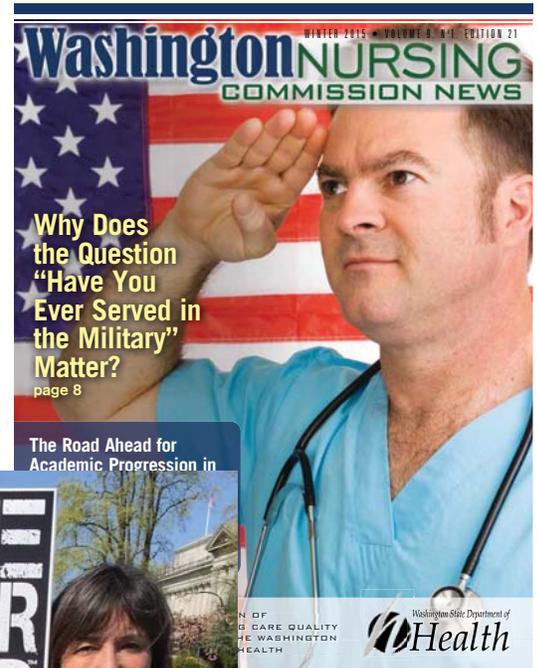
We are thankful for all of the outstanding network partners; WDVA is a key partner leading the way in supporting this most important mission.....there's more to do; GET INVOLVED. [WWW.RP6.ORG](http://WWW.RP6.ORG)

Scan the QR code below with your smartphone to go directly to the new WDVA webpage!



**Tell Your Nurse if you or a family member have ever served in the military.**

**They need to know to serve you better.**



Keep informed about upcoming Veteran events by checking our Calendar/ Public Events Page often

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/calendar>

Have an event of interest to Veterans you want others to know about?

Send fliers and information to [communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)

WDVA Veteran Voices  
PO Box 41150  
1102 Quince Street SE  
Olympia, WA 98504-1150

1-800-562-0132 opt. 1  
[communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)

Veterans Voices is published every other month for Washington veterans and all interested in news affecting veterans and their families. View previous editions here:  
<http://www.dva.wa.gov/about-wdva/brochures-and-newsletters>

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