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Our Veteran Online Partners

Texas Adjutant General's Department
www.agd.state.tx.us

Texas Veterans Commission
www.tvc.state.tx.us

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
www.thecb.state.tx.us

Texas Veterans Land Board
www.texasveterans.com

Texas Workforce Commission
www.twc.state.tx.us

Partners Across Texas and 211 Texas
www.texvet.com



Please send suggestions or comments pertaining to this newsletter to:

John House, Director
Marketing & Training
Texas Veterans Commission
P.O. Box 12277
Austin, TX 78711-2277
john.house@tvc.state.tx.us

Student earns her first Taps Tuition Voucher

By Lewis Hinojos, Texas Veterans Commission

Kori Jackson, a senior at Liberty High School, in Liberty, Texas, earned her first Taps tuition voucher on February 4, 2009, in Cleveland, Texas. Kori sounded Taps during the military funeral for Sgt. Jeremy Keaton Roebuck Walker, a paratrooper and member of the 82nd Airborne Division, who died in a weather-related car accident outside his home in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on January 28, 2009.

Kori, a three-time All Area Texas Small School Band Member, six-year first chair trumpet player, and member of Bugles Across America, had never sounded Taps at a funeral with full military honors. She said she was encouraged to volunteer because her band director suggested it would be a good idea. "I have an extensive military family history, so I thought it would be an honor for my family as well as for my band program," she said.

Tom Guidry, Liberty High School Band Director, who accompanied Kori to the funeral as her back-up should she have needed one said, "When we arrived, we were overwhelmed with all of the motorcycle members and their U.S. flags surrounding the motorcade and entrance to the funeral home."

Upon arrival, Kori was asked to perform an audition of Taps beforehand, to make sure she was able to handle the pressure of performing in front of such a large military crowd of over 300 people in attendance. "Kori pulled out her new trumpet and stood at attention and played flawlessly for the North Carolina crew. I spotted Sgt. Watson for a response and he gave me a thumbs up," Guidry said. "Kori passed the audition with flying colors. The members of the squadron from North Carolina who traveled here for the funeral were very impressed with her performance and approach. The main performance was both special and rewarding for all in attendance."

In her description of the military funeral and her experience, Kori said, "I really didn't know what to expect, and when I got there, it seemed like there were tons of people. It was the saddest thing I'd ever been to. You have to be in-human to not want to cry. I was thinking to myself, don't cry and don't choke. I closed my eyes and imagined that I was playing for my grandfather's funeral."

After the funeral, Kori said, "It was the most



Kori Jackson receives her first \$25 "Taps for Tuition" voucher from the Liberty High School Band Director Tom Guidry. Photo by Bruce.

rewarding and honoring experience I've ever had in my whole life."

Kori, who graduates from Liberty High School in June, plans on attending Stephen F. Austin State University and majoring in Biology Genetics. When asked if she will continue to sound Taps at military funerals while in college, Kori responded, "Yes Sir! I can't wait to do it again. I encourage all students to do this. It's really not as intimidating as it seems, and it's really rewarding. Look at me, I'm just a small town girl, and I did it."

Tom Guidry, in his 30 years of teaching, has had several of his students perform Taps at military funerals, and will continue to encourage participation in the Taps for Tuition voucher program. "I believe it is our duty to honor those who served in the military branches," he said.

Students in grades 6th – 12th, or at postsecondary educational institutions who sound Taps by bugle, trumpet or coronet during military honors funerals earn a \$25 voucher for use in the payment of tuition and/or required fees at any public institution of higher education in Texas. There is no limit on how many times a student may sound Taps at military funerals. Students wishing to participate, or band directors wishing to qualify their students for participation, should contact their local funeral home director or visit www.tvc.state.tx.us or email the Texas Veterans Commission at info@tvc.state.tx.us for more information. Each funeral home director has final discretion on whether to allow students to perform during military funerals. ☆



In the Spotlight

REALifelines Serves Wounded Warriors

*By Greg White, REALifelines Representative
Texas Veterans Commission*

The Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) program provides veterans and transitioning service members wounded and injured as a result of the War on Terrorism with the resources they need to transition to a rewarding career. The program also assists family members.

"If you have been wounded or injured serving this nation, real people are going to meet you face-to-face with the personalized help that you may need to recover and to succeed in a career that you love."

Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao
October 04, 2004

Developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the REALifelines Advisors provide valuable information and access to contact information for one-on-one employment assistance and online resources to assist wounded and injured transitioning service members and veterans in their reintegration into the civilian workforce.

Wounded warriors who separate from the service may have spent a substantial part of their life in the military. For many, the military is their first working experience upon leaving high school. The average age is 25 and many lack work-related skills and education. Further, the veterans participating in REALifelines have experienced life-altering injuries. Some diagnosed with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder experience difficulty establishing goals or formulating post-discharge plans. A common consequence of these two conditions is depression and may include a feeling of hopelessness that can prevent them from engaging systems on their own. The emotions and expectations of the injured veteran can range from feeling highly confident and looking forward to the future to feeling extremely anxious about separating and the reintegration process.



Originally piloted at Brooke Army Medical Center on Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, and administered by the Texas Veterans Commission, the REALifelines program has expanded and now serves the Warrior Transition Units on Fort Hood and Fort Bliss. The program serves approximately 1,700 veterans in Texas. The program primarily targets the needs of injured soldiers who served in OEF/OIF with employment related services. REALifelines provides the real "hand up" approach that these wounded warriors deserve. In addition, the program can provide services to a spouse or primary caregiver.

Through REALifelines and TVC Veterans Employment Representatives, services provided are personal and individually tailored to the specific needs of each participant. The VERs are devoted to enhancing the lives of these veterans and their families. Through web-based resources and personal interaction with the VERs, REALifelines offers opportunity to explore career options, establish a process and set reasonable goals. This support allows them to avail themselves of realistic opportunities, adjust expectations and enhance their transition into the community. The guidance also positively affects the wounded veteran's readjustment and the challenges he or she faces after separation.

To find the REALifelines representative nearest you, call the TVC at (512) 463-6826; visit our at www.tvc.state.tx.us; or email us at vetjobs@tvc.state.tx.us.★

World War II veteran receives overdue VA rating

The World War II veteran had never applied for VA benefits prior to visiting the VA Outpatient Clinic in Victoria, Texas, in October 2008. He stated that he had hearing problems for many years and he just couldn't afford new hearing aids any longer. He lived alone and his only monthly income was from Social Security. On that limited budget and the declining economy, there were more important purchases to make than hearing aids, he said.

healthcare through the VA Healthcare System based on financial information provided.

A few months later, the veteran received a letter to report to an examination to determine his disability and medical opinion. The opinion of the examiner reported that the veteran's hearing loss was likely due to his service. By February 2009, the veteran received his award letter from VA.

McGuill stated, "The veteran's hearing loss was given a service-connected rating for bilateral hearing loss and he was awarded a special monthly compensation for loss of use of his hearing."

Through the assistance of his local TVC representative, VA awarded compensation for his service-connected disability, which greatly improved his financial well-being and, most importantly, allowed him to receive the latest technology for hearing aids.

According to McGuill, this case is all too common. "There are many veterans from World War II and the Korean War that have not filed for benefits that they earned through their service. All veterans should visit their nearest veterans' representative and find out what benefits they are most deservedly entitled to. If TVC doesn't have a local office, veterans should check to see if their county has a veterans service office.

"The TVC's professional, highly trained and dedicated representatives can assist all veterans, their dependents and survivors with federal and state benefits. All it takes is for them to walk in and ask for assistance," McGuill said.

Texas Veterans Commission offices, veterans county service offices and other state and federal agencies are listed on the TVC website at www.tvc.state.tx.us.★

Phillip McGuill, the Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Claims Counselor stationed at the Victoria facility, visited with this particular veteran. The former airman spoke about his service in the Army Air Corps as an aircraft crewman on bombers during World War II. McGuill discussed the claim possibilities, as well as other benefits the veteran was entitled to receive, and assisted the veteran in filing a claim for service-connection of hearing loss in both ears. They also completed the necessary paperwork to receive



STATE OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

A Message from the Governor in honor of:

Memorial Day

May 25, 2009

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends."

Throughout our nation's history, the freedoms we enjoy have been won and protected by a brave few who understand that greatest and most selfless love. The men and women of our armed forces risk the ultimate sacrifice to protect fellow Americans and citizens of the world from tyranny and oppression. Every time they put on the uniform, these heroes renew their commitment to pay any price, to bear any burden, so that we might be free.

Many have given all for the cause. On this day of remembrance, our hearts are torn with sorrow for heroes lost, and filled with pride for the way they lived their lives. To these brave individuals, we owe the most profound respect and gratitude. To their loved ones, too, we owe our deepest thanks.

We pause today to reflect on these men and women of selfless devotion, and we are all reminded that the freedom we enjoy - and all too often take for granted - comes at a tremendous price. May all Texans be forever grateful.

First Lady Anita Perry joins me in paying tribute to these men and women of the highest honor.



Sincerely,



Rick Perry
Governor

Help our vets with on-the-job training

By Terrell O'Neill, Texas Veterans Commission



Police departments, fire departments, and law enforcement/fire fighter training facilities throughout Texas are responding to the call to Help Our Vets. A veteran eligible for benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill can be compensated monetarily while attending an approved training facility to receive licensure and additional compensation while completing the on-the-job training portion.

In order to become a licensed police officer or fire fighter in Texas, an individual must complete a minimum number of state mandated training hours. This function is performed by police, fire, and sheriff training academies approved in Texas by their respective commissions. If these academies are approved for veterans training, a veteran can receive a monthly check through the Department of Veterans Affairs while completing this training.

Once employed, the veteran generally must complete from 6-months to a year of on-the-job training while on probation. The veteran can also receive a monthly check while completing this training if the employer's facility is approved.

There are currently 45 on-the-job training programs approved for police officer and fire fighter training. Over 300 veterans and other eligible persons have been certified since 2007 in these programs, which include city and county police and fire departments; the Texas Department of Public Safety; U.S. Border Patrol; and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. In addition, there are 41 police, fire and sheriff training academies approved. These academies have certified approximately 350 veterans and other eligible persons since 2007.

The Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Education Program is actively requesting additional entities to become approved. Letters were recently sent to fire departments throughout Texas encouraging them to become approved for the on-the-job training program. This is in addition to numerous requests previously mailed to the training facilities.

Becoming a police officer or fire fighter is a perfect fit for a veteran. Training for basic peace officers or fire fighters is military in nature. Veterans have proven to be steady, dependable, mature and loyal employees. They are team-oriented and know the value of good health and safety. For employers who have participated in the on-the-job training program, it has shown that veterans have more than proven their worth.★



**TEXAS
VETERANS
COMMISSION**

**"Helping Veterans
Starts Here"**

- VA Claims Assistance
- Women's Program
- Veterans Education
- Employment Services

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TEXAS VETERANS LAND BOARD BENEFITS

VLB Offers Online Applications for Loan Programs for Texas Veterans

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Up to \$325,000 for purchase of primary residence
Up to \$25,000, one time closing, direct funding

Texas State Veterans Homes – Where Honor Lives

Amarillo
Big Spring

Bonham
El Paso Floresville

McAllen
Temple

Texas State Veterans Cemeteries

Killeen Mission
Abilene (*Dedication scheduled for May 25, 2009*)

Contact us today!

www.texasveterans.com ★ 1-800-252-VETS (8387)

Free Veterans Benefit Fairs & Other Events

Open to All Veterans, Their Families and Dependents!

Veterans Benefit Fairs

Valuable personal assistance with your questions and claims will be given by experts from

Texas Veterans Commission Claims, Employment & Education, Texas Veterans Land Board, Veterans County Service Officers, Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal, state and local representatives.

Bring pertinent case information to discuss pending cases.

Saturday, May 2, 2009
9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Bastrop County Courthouse
804 Pecan Street
Bastrop, TX 76448

Contact Victor Polanco
Texas Veterans Commission
at (512) 389-6543
for further info.

Saturday, May 9, 2009
10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Resource Connection Conf. Ctr
2300 Circle Dr., Blvd. 2300
Ft. Worth, TX 76119

Contact Chester Slaughter, Tarrant
Co. Veterans Service Officer at
(817) 531-5645 for further info.

Saturday, May 2, 2009
10:00 am to 1:00 pm

VFW Post 4692
794 Harvey Mitchell Pkwy.
Bryan, TX 77801

Contact Johnny Yeppez, Brazos
Co. Veterans Service Officer
at (979) 361-4360
for further info.

Saturday, May 16, 2009
9:00 am to 1:30 pm

Southwest Center
3222 W. Seventh St.
Ft. Worth, TX 76119

Contact Vietnam Veterans of
America #278 at (870) 773-8279
or (903) 824-2727 or online at
www.vva278.org for further info.

Transition Assistance Programs

Saturday, May 9, 2009 Sunday, May 10, 2009
9:00 am to 3:30 pm 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Camp Maxey
6351 US Hwy 271 North
Powderly, TX 75473

Saturday, May 16, 2009 Sunday, May 17, 2009
9:00 am to 3:30 pm 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Laredo National Guard Armory
5119 Bob Bullock Loop
Laredo, TX 78041

TOPICS INCLUDE:

Uniformed Services Employment &
Reemployment Rights (USERRA)
Veterans Preference in Federal Hiring
Job Search
Writing Effective Resumes
Answering Difficult Interview Questions
Evaluating Job Offers
Federal & Texas State Benefits for Veterans

Contact Julie Ramirez at julie.ramirez1.ng.army.mil
or call (512) 782-1235 for further info.

Salute to Disabled Veterans

Saturday, May 16, 2009
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Crowne Plaza Riverwalk Hotel
111 Pecan St., East
San Antonio, TX 78205

TOPICS INCLUDE:

Suicide Prevention & PTSD
Home Foreclosure
Veterans Business Enterprises
SBA Solutions
Texas A&M Entrepreneurship
Boot Camp for Veterans
with Disabilities
New Executive Order Supporting
Military Spouses Employment
Post 9/11 GI Bill

Contact Aurelia Lopez,
Department of Veterans Affairs,
at (202) 461-4124 for further info.



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**TEXAS
STATE VETERANS
CEMETERY**

**Dedication &
Opening Ceremony**

**Memorial Day
Monday, May 25, 2009
Abilene, Texas
10:00 am**

Public Invited

**Texas State Veterans Cemetery
7457 West Lake Road
Abilene, TX 79601**