

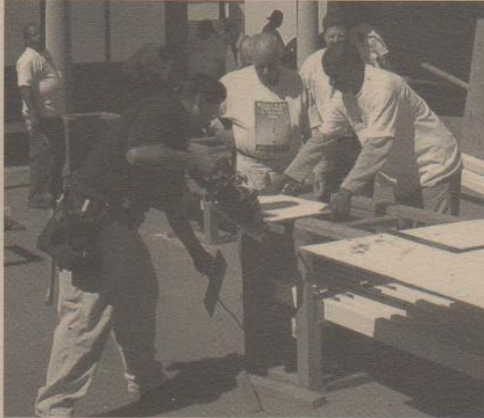
Volunteering Contributes to Recovery

by Pete Brito, Program Coordinator, Transitional Housing Program at Treasure Island

Veterans participating in Swords to Plowshares' Transitional Housing Program at Treasure Island volunteer in the San Francisco and Treasure Island communities. Our experience has shown that in order to recover to a more abundant

and substance abuse. That's one reason volunteerism is an integral part of the program.

Thank you to all the veterans in the Transitional Housing Program who have contributed their time and energy to helping others. —



Once-homeless veterans participating in Swords to Plowshares' Transitional Housing Program at Treasure Island joined with other corporate and community volunteers to build benches, planters, and paint the public elementary school on Treasure Island. The children who attend the school are from some of the poorest neighborhoods in San Francisco. The non-profit organization Rebuilding Together San Francisco, which coordinated the project, leveraged resources from non-profit, corporate and government supporters – including more than 100 volunteer hours – to improve the school facility.

lifestyle, we must complete three steps. The first step is to ask for help, the second step is to take the help we ask for, and the third step is to return the help.

In recent years, veterans participating in the program have contributed thousands of hours to the broader community. For instance, they:

- played a major role in getting veterans out to vote during election time.
- helped bring awareness to issues affecting veterans' use of the San Francisco War Memorial Veterans Building, and
- advocated at City Hall for a gym for youth on Treasure Island, which will open soon.

Just recently, these veterans were a major volunteer force in the Rebuilding Together San Francisco project at the public elementary school on Treasure Island. They built benches, planter boxes, and painted the face of this public school. The volunteer captains from other participating agencies marveled at how the veterans worked together to get the job done. By lunch time, these veterans were asked to help the other volunteer teams so we could meet the deadline.

However, the real payoff was seeing the faces of the children when they arrived at school on Monday. Giving builds self-esteem and connects a person to the broader community, among other benefits. Time and again we have seen veterans who participate in volunteer work become leaders in their community and achieve long-term recovery from homelessness

Swords Helps Shape Public Policy

Deputy Director Leon Winston participated on Mayor Newsom's 10-Year Planning Council to End Chronic Homelessness. Veterans comprise a significant portion of San Francisco's estimated 3,000 to 5,000 chronically homeless people, the men and women who are most visible and most troubled. In fact, more than half of the veterans participating in our residential housing programs are considered chronically homeless when they enter the programs. The plan calls for increasing supportive housing capacity to care for those who are currently homeless, as well as prevention measures so other men and women do not become chronically homeless.

On the national front, in spring 2004, representatives of Swords to Plowshares attended the annual conference of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, of which Swords is a founding member. More than 300 representatives from governmental and non-governmental organizations that assist homeless and impoverished veterans attended the conference. Swords was a presenter on two panels: "VA Benefits for Homeless Veterans" and "Effective Cost Allocation." —

Swords
to
Plowshares
VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

PLOWSHARES

FALL 2004

A NEWSLETTER OF
SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES

A VETERANS' RIGHTS ORGANIZATION
SINCE 1974

Michael Blecker, Executive Director

From the Director

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As Swords to Plowshares celebrates 30 years of service to veterans in need, I think of the thousands of veterans who have benefited from our programs, programs that address the root causes of homelessness. I also think of the 1,500,000 soldiers now serving around the globe. Of the men and women who saw combat in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Iraq, and are now suffering lasting wounds – mental, physical, and spiritual – from those experiences. On any given night, there are more than 275,000 former soldiers living on the streets. In San Francisco alone, 2,500 veterans have no place to call home. We don't want this number to grow.

Through the three decades of our work, Swords has remained an anchor organization for the veteran community. In fact, Swords is one of the few organizations in the country that offers a full range of services to disadvantaged veterans – providing employment services, legal assistance, temporary and permanent housing, and substance abuse and

mental health services to nearly 1,500 veterans each year.

Yet the successes I think of are those of Walter, who graduated from our transitional housing program, found a construction job through our employment services, was promoted to supervisor, and is now encouraging his employer to hire other veterans. And of John, the first legally blind veteran to graduate from our transitional housing program and his new companion – a labrador retriever who serves as his guide dog, thanks to Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Swords to Plowshares has much to be proud of; we also know our work is not done. Your support has helped us through three decades of change and growth and will nourish crucial programs for veterans in the years to come. We will continue growing and developing our programs to meet the needs of our nation's former soldiers. In fact, this spring we increased our residential housing capacity by 30; we now directly house 223 veterans on any given night. Thank you for helping to bring a brighter future for our nation's veterans. —

CONSIDER SWORDS IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS

For thirty years, Swords to Plowshares has offered critical care and assistance to veterans in need. For many veterans and supporters of our work, the inclusion of Swords to Plowshares in their estate plans is the means by which they can make a tremendous impact in the lives of homeless and impoverished veterans.

You can help ensure Swords to Plowshares' crucial services continue for future generations of war veterans by including Swords to Plowshares in your estate plans. Planned gifts may allow you to receive many associated financial benefits such as tax savings, income streams, or lowered estate tax liability.

To create a bequest, simply write: "I give Swords to Plowshares: A Veterans' Rights Organization (Federal Tax ID 94-2260626) the sum of \$_____."

Meet with your attorney or financial advisor to determine whether your estate plan needs to be updated.

- Discuss which planned gift option makes the most sense for you.
- Notify Swords to Plowshares of your gift and allow your leadership to encourage others to do the same.

Update on the Legal Front

Swords to Plowshares is one of the few organizations in the country that provides free attorney representation, case management and advocacy to indigent veterans seeking benefits before the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Challenge:

- Veterans make up close to 30% of the nation's homeless population yet less than 13% of the total population.
- VA benefits are not automatic. For men and women suffering from mental illness and physical problems, the difficult and complicated process is even more daunting.
- Many of our country's former servicemembers never receive the compensation they are due. Our nation's veterans continue to suffer from perhaps the last example of codified institutional discrimination against a class of citizens.
- A Civil-War era law prohibits veterans from paying attorneys to counsel or represent them before the VA in most instances. Violations of this federal statute subject both the veteran and the attorney to criminal penalties.

- In 1988, the U.S. Congress passed the Veterans' Judicial Review Act and created the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, an Article I court with exclusive jurisdiction over VA benefits. For the first time, veterans could obtain independent judicial review of VA decisions. This Court's review is limited to the paper record, making effective advocacy at the administrative stage crucial.

The Legal Program:

- Four staff attorneys with 42 years of experience and expertise in veterans' law.
- An annual budget of \$300,000.
- Last year:
 - Won \$1.45 million in retroactive awards for 65 veterans.
 - Secured \$1,224 in average recurring monthly benefits for each person, in addition to their retroactive award.
 - Provided free legal advice to more than 400 veterans and their families.
- More than 90% of Swords' veterans benefits claims have been successfully resolved at the administrative level. —

Swords to Plowshares thanks the following volunteers for their good work on behalf of veterans in need:

William Cogswell
 Larry Evans
 Folks from the Transitional Housing Program at Treasure Island
 Pamela Herlich
 David Miklos
 Dianne Paulson
 Jo Policastro
 Claire Scott
 Sara Seltzer
 Earl Shagley
 Levi Strauss Community Involvement Team for the Homeless
 Paul Sussman
 Leo Wong

IN MEMORIAM

May your names inscribed below remind us always of the sacrifices you made in service to your country. You will forever be tall and strong, fearless and brave, young and carefree in our hearts and minds. Your spirit moves on with grace. We will never forget you.

SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES REMEMBERS...

DAVID BELL, U.S. AIR FORCE, 1971 - 1993

JAMES TIMOTHY BRADLEY, U.S. AIR FORCE, 1979 - 1980

JAY COCHRANE, U.S. ARMY, 1973 - 1974

TERRY GREEN, U.S. MARINE CORPS, 1977 - 1983

BOBBY JOE HENDERSON, U.S. ARMY, 1974 - 1978

JESSE MAYES, U.S. NAVY, 1964 - 1968

JAMES EARL METZ, U.S. ARMY, 1971 - 1972

MAURICE J. SONNIER, U.S. MARINE CORPS, 1977 - 1979

SAM TROXELL, U.S. ARMY, 1969 - 1971

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Swords to Plowshares — 30 Years in the Community

In the past 30 years, *Swords to Plowshares* has helped thousands of veterans rebuild their lives and live again with respect, dignity and hope. We have done so by providing direct services — case management and counseling, housing, employment assistance, and legal aid — to disadvantaged veterans and by advocating for effective public policy. Here are some of our accomplishments from the last 30 years:

1970s

- Six VISTA volunteers left the Veterans Administration to form Swords to Plowshares to meet the needs of returning Vietnam veterans.
- After a three-year legal struggle, forces the Veterans Administration to grant them recognition and becomes the first new group in 32 years certified to represent veterans in benefit claims.
- Wins one of the first post-traumatic stress disorder cases.
- Develops the *Agent-Orange Self-Help Guide* and plays a key role in designing programs for compensation of injuries resulting from the use of Agent Orange.

1980s

- Sees an increasing number of homeless veterans and begins providing mental health and outreach programs.
- Pioneers a model transitional housing program for 12 homeless veterans at 44 McAllister Street, a residential hotel in the Tenderloin District.
- Partners with Conard House and Jesuit Volunteers to run the 16th Street Hotel Program, a supportive housing program for chronically homeless people.

1990s

- Opens two group homes for 12 homeless

veterans in the Balboa District near City College of San Francisco.

- Holds Northern California's first Stand Down which assists 600 homeless veterans.
- Releases the *Depleted Uranium Case Narrative* and provides outreach to ailing Gulf War veterans.
- Executive Director Michael Blecker serves on the Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Assistance, a twelve-member congressionally chartered commission which made recommendations to Congress around servicemember and veterans' benefits programs. This is the most extensive review of veterans' benefits programs and services since the Omar Bradley Commission of 1956.

2000s

- Moves its transitional housing program from an inner-city residential hotel to Treasure Island, a geographically more supportive environment. The program houses up to 56 veterans at any one time, and provides individual and group counseling, life skills training, pre-vocational development, substance abuse education and relapse intervention.
- Converts former U.S. Army barracks at the Presidio into the Veterans Academy, San Francisco's only permanent supportive housing for veterans. Housing 100 once-homeless veterans at a time, the Academy provides a safe and supportive community where former soldiers can learn new skills.
- Receives the 2001 Center for Mental Health Services Homeless Programs Branch Exemplary Program Award, one of six programs nationwide — and the only veteran-specific one — to be granted this recognition by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Expands transitional housing capacity by 30.
- Directly houses 223 once-homeless veterans at any given time through a combination of transitional and supportive housing. —

From the Trenches

Job Placement Training for Veterans

Are you an unemployed veteran looking for a job? Do you know an unemployed veteran who wants help finding work? If so, Swords to Plowshares' Employment & Training Services Unit has a number of programs to assist the vet job seeker. We can help veterans secure part-time and full-time work. We also offer training to acquire or enhance occupational skills. To find out if you are eligible and how we can benefit you or a veteran that you know, please call (415) 252-4788, visit www.stpjobs.org or come by our Service Center at 1060 Howard Street. Employment and Training Services Unit intake hours are from 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM Monday – Thursday. Employers with job opportunities for veterans are also invited to contact us. —

Donating Through Community Thrift

Each time you donate clothes, books or kitchenware to the Community Thrift Store you can support programs for disenfranchised veterans. Simply allocate your donated item(s) to Swords to Plowshares with Charity Code #34, and we'll receive the proceeds once the item is sold. The Community Thrift Store is located at 623 Valencia Street, near 17th Street in San Francisco's Mission District. Please don't forget to call the store at (415) 861-4910 before making your donation. Thank you! —

Ticket to a Better Future for Vets

Do you have used BART tickets with some money left on them? Don't throw them away! Help turn them into donations for Swords to Plowshares. Thanks to BART and the East Bay Community Foundation, your used tickets can help low-income and homeless veterans transition to self-sufficiency. Simply enclose your BART tickets in an envelope and send them to: Swords to Plowshares, ATTN: Resource Development, 1060 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. It's an easy way to help veterans in need. —

Seeking Suggestions

As part of our 30-year anniversary, we're taking a look at who we are. This past year, we conducted a comprehensive strategic plan with input from veterans, supporters, and other community members to see where we've been, where we are, and where we're going so we can best serve veterans in need. As part of this effort, we have adopted a new mission statement. We're also taking a look at our "tag line" – the Vets-Helping-Vets part of our logo – and we want your help!

We've decided to ask our supporters for suggestions on a new tag line, or a vote to keep the current one. We'd like our new tag line to include the word "Vet" or "Veteran" and the phrase "Since 1974." Otherwise, the rest is up to you. Email your suggestions or questions to tagline@swords-to-plowshares.org by August 31, 2004. The lucky winner will be treated to lunch with Swords' Executive Director and Board president. Thank you for your help!

If you'd like a copy of the strategic plan, please contact Cyane C. Anaya at 415-252-4788 or canaya@swords-to-plowshares.org. —

Swords to Plowshares thanks the members of the Veterans Advisory Committee for their advice and assistance with the strategic plan:

Al
Bo
Gilbert
Glenn
Guillermo
James
Linda
Nate
Pasquale
Ron

Swords to Plowshares' Mission

We are pleased to share with you our new mission statement which was developed by staff and board members and ratified by the Board of Directors in June 2004.

War causes wounds and suffering that last beyond the battlefield. Swords to Plowshares' mission is to heal the wounds, to restore dignity, hope and self-sufficiency to all veterans in need, and to significantly reduce homelessness and poverty among veterans.

Founded in 1974, Swords to Plowshares is a community-based not-for-profit organization that provides counseling and case management, employment and training, housing, and legal assistance to veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area. We promote and protect the rights of veterans through advocacy, public education and partnerships with local, state and national entities.

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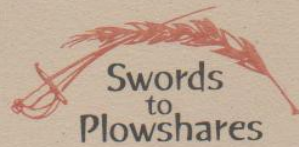
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"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:4



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

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Profiles of Courage



Eighth Annual Veterans Day Dinner • 30th Anniversary
A Benefit for Swords to Plowshares
Wednesday, November 10, 2004 • Marines' Memorial Club



Honorary Co-Chairs

- John and Tina Kecker • Mr. and Mrs. William A. Millichap •
- Major General & Mrs. Michael J. Myatt (USMC Ret) •
- Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and Mr. Paul F. Pelosi •

Invite you to join Swords to Plowshares in celebrating an important milestone –

Its 30th Anniversary

Here are just a few reasons to attend the Veterans Day Dinner:

- Hear inspiring stories of formerly homeless veterans who, with the help of Swords to Plowshares, have overcome homelessness, substance abuse and other obstacles to re-establish their lives.
- Enjoy a memorable evening with more than 300 members of the community, including veterans, business leaders, legal advocates and government officials.
- Support the only nonprofit in the San Francisco Bay Area that provides a full range of care to veterans in need.
- Share this special observation of Veterans Day with Swords to Plowshares.

To learn about underwriting opportunities or for ticket information,
call Ron Wong & Associates at (415) 355-9988 or SwordsDinner@wongway.net.