

Vietnam Veterans of America Lehigh Valley, Chapter 415

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A NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION

At the December, 2011 meeting of Chapter 415, Rich Hudzinski delivered a PowerPoint presentation containing a bold, new strategic plan for the entire chapter. This plan is the result of many hours of meetings and discussion by your board members to improve our organization.

In essence, the overall plan addresses the direction and focus for the next couple of years. In the plan that Rich presented, your board reviewed all the focal points of our chapter. Actually, many of the items are ongoing and issues that we already deal with on a monthly basis. Topics like legislation, PTSD, fundraising and fellowship are

items that remain in current discussion throughout the year. The Strategic Plan provides greater clarity in a way that will enable greater productivity when we formulate our committees.

Chapter 415 is the only Congressionally-Chartered Viet-



nam Veterans Organization in the Lehigh Valley and with that comes the inherent responsibility to serve in a way that reminds the public what and

how the term "veteran" is defined.

The Strategic Plan has been emailed to each veteran on our webmaster's registry. If you would like a written copy, please contact a board member. In addition, a survey was distributed at the December meeting asking you for input. Please bring it to the January meeting when we vote on the entire package. Remember, your opinion is valuable and vital to the endeavors in the new year for Chapter 415.

LEHIGH VALLEY MILITARY AFFAIRS COUNCIL - NOVEMBER MEETING REPORTED BY DUANE CERINO

Clyde Hoch, a Marine tank commander in Vietnam, was the keynote speaker last month. He wrote a book entitled "Tracks." He served during the 68 TET Offensive south of Da Nang. His experiences told of an RPG coming right at him and then it went

over his head. Another time his tank hit a land mine and the explosion knocked him out.

Rich Hudzinski reported on trying to get the VA to work with local veteran agencies. Thirteen percent of Lehigh

Valley veterans are unemployed at the current time. Healing Waters is planning a camping trip. Some good news: Veterans that are receiving benefits from the VA will get a 3.6% COLA increase next year.

“ UNCOMMON VALOR WAS A COMMON VIRTUE ”

A PILGRIMAGE TO THIS MONUMENT IS REQUIRED !

This is the largest bronze monument in the world. The 32 foot high figures are shown erecting a 60 foot bronze flagpole from which a cloth flag flies 24 hours a day. The memorial is 78 high overall and the M-1 rifle and carbine carried by two of the figures are 16 and 12 feet long respectively.

After 36 days, Iwo Jima finally fell to our Marines. Of the forty men in 3rd Platoon

who stormed the beach, only four escaped being killed or seriously injured. Of the six men who raised the flag, Cpl. Block, Sgt. Strank, and PFC Sousley were all KIA within days. They are among 6,821 Americans who never left Iwo alive, In addition, 19,217 were maimed or grievously wounded during the invasion.

The five Marines and their corpsman are forever immortalized in bronze and repre-

sent the supreme sacrifice of all Marines who went before them, and all who follow. They live on hallowed ground!

- PFC Ira Hayes**, a full blooded Pima Indian from Arizona.
- Sgt. Strank**, a Pennsylvania coal mine worker.
- Cpl. Harlon Block**, a draftee from the oil fields of Texas.
- PFC Franklin Sousley**, a 19 year old Kentucky farm boy.
- PFC Rene Gagnon**, a New-Englander
- PM2 John Bradley**, Corpsman.



Inscribed are the campaigns in which Marines have fought since 1775.

“Never again will One Generation of Veterans Abandon another”

KOKOMO, INDIANA REUNION IS THIS YOUR YEAR?

The Howard County Vietnam Veterans Organization was established in 1981. They now own 40 acres and are about 8 miles east of Kokomo, Indiana. The nickname for the property is “The Healing Fields.” Yes, you can join the organization and participate in the annual reunion which will be held Thursday

thru Sunday, September 13th through the 16th, 2012. Registration forms will be on their website in January and you must abide by the rules of the reunion which are also posted. There is also a smaller reunion called “Firebase Kokomo 2012” on June 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

You’ve heard us talk about the reunion at chapter meet-

ings and, quite frankly, it is an experience that you will walk away from feeling proud to have been a member of the armed forces. Want more information, please inquire at the January Meeting!

Driving time is about 12 hours, although I confess in taking two camping days to complete the journey.

WEBWeekly
what's new on vva.org

UNDERSTANDING VETERAN SUICIDES

Consider the facts: Earlier this spring, data showed an average of 950 suicide attempts by vets who are receiving some type of treatment from the VA. Seven percent of the attempts are successful, and eleven percent of those who don't succeed on the first attempt try

again within nine months. These numbers show about 18 veteran suicides a day and about five by vets receiving VA care.

Although statistics on suicides are not as accurate as we would like because so many of them are simply not

reported, as veterans of the Vietnam War, many of us have known someone who has committed suicide or others who have attempted it. VVA continues to believe that the VA has not gone far enough to understand and reduce the number of suicides



UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE: A FOX NEWS REPORT

Vietnam: 100,000 Killed, Hurt by Abandoned Weapons!

More than 100,000 Vietnamese have been killed or injured by land mines or UXO's since the war ended nearly 40 years ago. The United States used about 16 million tons of bombs and ammo while allied with the South. About 42,132 people have been killed and 62,163 have been injured by land mines. The U.S. Ambassador

David Shear said in a conference that America has provided 62 million to help Vietnam cope with this "painful legacy." Hong Linh, Vice Minister of Labor in Vietnam, said that explosives remain on about 16 million acres of land, or more than one-fifth of the country.

The minister also went on to say that only 740,000 acres or, roughly 5 percent of the contaminated area has been cleared. The

cost for clearing additional 1.2 million acres would cost about 595 million in the next five years.



THERE IS A GROWING GAP BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND THE MILITARY.

The Defense Department reports there is a disconnect between Americans and their military. Just one-half of one percent of Americans served in uniform at any given time during the past decade – the longest period of sustained conflict in the country's history and as the military shrinks, so will the disconnect. The re-

port appears to confirm that for many Americans, military service is a family tradition. Seventy-nine percent of the people surveyed reported that an immediate family member is serving or has served in the military.

Retired Navy Admiral Mike Mullen recently spoke at West

Point and expressed concern that civilians don't fully understand the sacrifices the those in the military are making. He said "While our work is appreciated, I fear civilians do not know us. I fear they do not comprehend the full weight of the burden we carry or the price we pay when we return from battle."



BATTLESHIP NEW JERSEY ANY INTEREST IN AN OVERNIGHTER FOR CHAPTER 415?

Is there any interest in spending a night aboard a floating museum on the Camden Waterfront? Adult encampments for VFW and military reunions are offered throughout the year but we must book soon for 2012. Visiting the web site, you are advised what to bring and what

to leave at home. Encampments are for groups only and can accommodate groups up to 300. You get to stow your gear in the same lockers as the sailors, sleep in the same bunks as the enlisted men, chow down in the crew's mess and even purchase a personalized "Dog Tag." Imagine enter-

ing the ships 16-inch gun turrets and visiting the Combat Engagement Center. You can visit the Captain's and Admiral's cabins and the Officer's Wardroom while climbing up the original ladders. Family Members Welcome. Cost is \$53.00 for the encampment and whatever expense money you wish.





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Meetings: First Thursday of each month at the **Banko Building**, Muhlenberg Hospital off of Schoenersville Road. Turn onto Westgate Drive until you can make a right into the hospital.

By the late 1970's, it was clear the established veterans groups had failed to make a priority of the issues of concern to the Vietnam Veteran. The U.S. Congress would respond to the legitimate needs of Vietnam Veterans only if it proved to have the political strength. By the summer of 1979, the Council of Vietnam Veterans had transformed into Vietnam Veterans of America, a veterans service organization made up of, and devoted to, Vietnam Veterans. Today, VVA National is 50,000 strong with chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam. State Councils coordinate activities of local chapters.

VVA helps to provide greater public awareness of the outstanding issues surrounding Vietnam-era veterans by disseminating written information on a continual basis. They work actively in the legislative area, as well. With 635 chapters throughout the US, Vietnam Veterans has made significant strides in providing assistance and being an advocate when necessary.

(www.vva.org/history.html)

PUTTING THE "NEW" IN NEWSLETTER 2012 AND BEYOND! (EDITORIAL)

Playing for a NJ state title I once delivered a pre-game speech to my boy's soccer team in a locker room and I said to the athletes kneeling in front of me looking to me for words of wisdom:

"When this game is over and when we get back on the bus for that long ride home and you review this game to assess your individual performance please ask yourself, Could I have given any more of myself to help my teammates win this game. If the answer to that question is no, then you can be at peace with your contribution and hold your head high regardless of the outcome." We then put our hands together and I repeated that same phrase that preceded every game for over thirty years of coaching: "Gentlemen, It's Showtime."

The analogy is simple, As a Chapter, if we all contribute a little during the course of the year, we will be able to look back and collectively celebrate a successful year. In a sense we are a team! And we all know to be a champion, you must take yourself out of your comfort zone and perform beyond what was previously thought of as unimaginable.

Make a resolution for yourself this year. Set a small goal for yourself. I did for myself!! Ideas are bountiful. Here are a few suggestions; (1) Going out to Penn State with a Delegate to see if you may like being representing Chapter 415; (2) Run for office or work in conjunction with an officer to get to know the ropes; (3) Go to one or two of

Phillipsburg's veterans activities' (4) Take over a committee or co-chair one if you're not quite ready; Help out at one of the fellowship activities we have planned for this year; (5) Help at one of the "Mall Days"; (6) Get involved with the Vets Sanctuary; and the list could go on and on.

This newsletter has a new look for the new year. Your humble editor will make every attempt to deliver timely and useful information to chapter members.....but I sure could use some help in researching, evaluating and determining what should be included. So I say to you, "Ladies and Gentlemen, It's Showtime!"