

The Honorable Mayor Jonathan Rothschild  
And Honorable Council Members  
City of Tucson  
P.O. Box 27210  
Tucson, AZ 85726

Subject: Veterans Affairs Committee 2013 Annual Report

In 2013, the Veterans Affairs Committee (VAC) pursued its function to provide a common forum to member organizations for discussion and coordination of activities. Each meeting participating organizations including the American Legion, Association of Vietnam Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, Korean War Veterans Association, the Military Officers Association of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Tucson Jewish War Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Tucson Airport Authority (Airport Military Lounge), Arizona Department of Veterans Services, the Veterans Administration Hospital, Arizona Department of Economic Security Employment Services, the Tucson Veterans Cemetery Group and the Women's Army Corps Veterans Association, had a chance to distribute information and report on upcoming events, programs and projects.

The Committee's activities rely on the contributions of its member organizations and the generosity of local businesses and citizens. The VAC sponsored or had members participate in several Tucson 2013 events:

- Paul Marsh continues to make progress in securing land for a Veterans cemetery in Pima County.
- The Four Chaplains Ceremony honors the four military chaplains of different religious faiths who gave their lives to save others when the U.S.A.T. Dorchester was torpedoed and sunk during World War II. The VAC commissioned a bronze plaque created to honor the Four Chaplains. Dignity Memorial donated the plaque to the Committee. The plaque was permanently mounted in Veterans Memorial Park in Tucson on Jan. 29, 2012. Ceremony was February 3, 2013.
- The Welcome Home parade organized by Mr. Alan Toppel for returning Combat Veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom was held on Saturday, March 31, 2012. **Please note that Mr. Toppel passed away this year.**
- In January 2011, the Committee voted to send representatives to the United Arizona Veterans (UAV) meetings held in Phoenix. The UAV's purpose is to support and endorse legislative actions at state and federal levels that benefit the general welfare of all Arizona Veterans and their families. It is dedicated to activities and objectives that stimulate love of state and country. Committee Members Vern Pall and Norman Ross alternated as the Tucson representative to the UAV. In November 2013, the VAC decided that it was no longer continuing to maintain a presence on the UAV.
- On November 7, 2013, the World War II memorial was unveiled in Armory Park. Many local dignitaries were in attendance for the unveiling.

- The Veterans Day Parade was held November 11 and sponsored by the American Legion Post 59. Our Mayor, Jonathan Rothschild, was one of the dignitaries to ride in the Parade.
- Operation Exodus sponsored by the VAC, took place December 20<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup>, just before the Christmas holiday. It is an annual event designed to make the trip of young soldiers on their way home at Christmastime more comfortable by providing healthy snacks, refreshments, and other essentials to ease their journey. For many of the troops, some expected to have late flights and long layovers, it is their last stateside leave before being sent to Afghanistan or other military installations overseas. As an addition to the goody bags, Congressman Ron Barber's Office provided Christmas cards made by local public, private, and charter school students as well as retirement communities, clubs, organizations and individuals. Committee members and volunteers provided conversation and thanks for the soldiers' service.

Presentations during the 2013 Committee sessions were made by:

*January 9, 2013 Andrew Gustafson from Building Up Vets gave a presentation to the VAC.*

*March 13, 2013 A presentation from Eileen Moyer-Mertz and Donna Russo, Veterans Neighborhood Project on veteran homelessness.*

*September 11, 2013 Steven (Chico) Aguirre, American Legion Post 59 spoke on the upcoming Veterans' Day Parade in Tucson.*

*December 11, 2013 Mayor Jonathan Rothschild gave a brief presentation on the City's initiative and programs on homeless veterans.*

The Veterans Affairs Committee appreciates the Mayor, Council and City Clerk support.

Respectfully submitted,



Dan Ross

Chairman, Tucson Veterans Affairs Committee