



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

PO Box 355, Champaign, IL 61824-0355 (773) 569-3520

www.vvaw.org

vvaw@vvaw.org

March 2013

Dear VVAW Supporter,

I'd like to thank you for your continued support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Without you, we could not continue the important work that we began in 1967. Over the last forty-six years we have carried out the struggle for veterans, peace and justice. My name is Susan Schnall and I joined the VVAW Board last year, after having been a long-time supporter of VVAW and an anti-war activist since my service as a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the US Navy.

I became an active duty member of the Navy Reserves in June 1967 and was stationed at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California. I witnessed first hand the terrible cost of war on the bodies and souls of the young men returning from Vietnam. I felt that I had become a part of the war machine and had a responsibility to speak up against the death and destruction the US government was causing overseas. In October, 1968, I organized and participated in the distribution of anti-war leaflets over military installations in the San Francisco Bay Area, held a press conference while in uniform, and then marched in a GI and Veterans March for Peace in San Francisco in Navy dress. In 1969 I was tried by general court martial and found guilty of violating the US Military Code of Justice and sentenced to six months of hard labor.

I spent 31 years working in various public hospitals in New York City as an administrator responsible for a number of departments. For the past 15 years I have taught Public Health and Policy at New York University's School of Continuing Professional Studies. My peace and anti-war work continue as a National Coordinator of VVAW and co-coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign (VAORRC).

I am proud to be part of Vietnam Veterans Against the War as we celebrate 46 years of organizing for veterans, peace and justice. And I know we would not be here today without your sustaining support. Many of those who survived their service in Vietnam are now succumbing to war-related illnesses. This past Saturday, February 16, a group of folks from VVAW and VFP worked together to organize the Celebration of the Life of David Cline to commemorate the fifth anniversary of his death. Dave was a longtime National Coordinator of VVAW and was a co-founder of VAORRC. Like many of you, I knew Dave in the 1970s from his anti-war work. Then in 2006, I had the opportunity to work with Dave on Agent Orange relief efforts through VAORRC -- a coalition of American veterans, Vietnamese, and other community leaders.

This February's event focused on remembering Dave through testimonials of friends and family, and included panel discussions on dissent in the military, veterans returning home, remediation/reconciliation, and the role of veterans in the peace and social justice movement. It was an incredibly successful event with attendance of over 200 people from VVAW, VFP, VAORRC, and others in the peace and social justice movement. Le Hoai Trung, Ambassador from Vietnam to the United Nations, spoke about his appreciation for the work of Dave Cline and other veterans in ending the war in southeast Asia.

Dave often spoke out about his own personal struggles with the effects of Agent Orange exposure and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and he knew the importance of VVAW's Military and Veteran Counseling Services. VVAW's Military and Veteran Counseling Service provides free direct services, including counseling as well as legal, medical, and mental health referrals for GIs, veterans, and their families. **Your financial support directly sustains this**

program. VVAW's Trauma/Mental Health Counselor, Johanna (Hans) Buwalda, helps GIs, veterans, and their families by providing counseling in person, over the phone, through email, and even over Skype.

In the last few months, more and more younger veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are seeking out VVAW's services. Many of them, like Jason, have been out of the Army for several years, making use of the GI Bill to get a college education. But Jason is having an extremely hard time with school. They don't offer veteran-specific services and managing PTSD while taking classes is challenging. He has a hard time focusing and he can't sleep most nights, so he often turns in his assignments late. There are days where he can't be around people, so he doesn't go to class because the noise of students around him is too much to bear. Jason was ready to get a mental health evaluation and start treatment for his PTSD so he drove across two states to see Hans in person at our Chicago office. He knew about VVAW and in taking the first step to get counseling, he wanted to go somewhere he trusted.

Hans has also been working with James, a Vietnam veteran, who will not leave his house to get counseling, or for anything else. His PTSD symptoms keep him confined. He found VVAW's services on Facebook and has been completing his evaluation and counseling with Hans over email. James isn't comfortable on the phone and he gets overwhelmed trying to complete his VA paperwork. So Hans emails him a few questions at a time and works with him in small increments to keep it from being stressful for him.

These details might seem trivial or small, but they are everything to someone who is working to cope with their PTSD. What makes VVAW's Military Counseling Services unique is that they are free of charge, confidential, and are open to current service members and veterans of all eras as well as their loved ones. Hans brings the services to each veteran, whether it takes Skype, emails or home visits, when a veteran's PTSD keeps them from coming to her. **Without your support, VVAW could not continue our Military and Veteran Counseling Service, serving hundreds of GIs, veterans, and their loved ones every year.**

We are deeply thankful when our members and supporters make tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level. Every donation, no matter the size, enable us to maintain our free counseling services, issue our free semi-annual newspaper, and sustain our continued organizing efforts to achieve decent benefits for all veterans and oppose unnecessary and illegal wars waged by our country, now and into the future. **Take this opportunity to make a tax-deductible donation to support VVAW's work. We thank all of you for your continued support.**

Sincerely,

Susan Schnall

Susan Schnall
VVAW National Coordinator

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at www.vvaw.org, a one-time or monthly donation.

Name (print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-Mail Address (please print clearly) _____

Phone _____