

By Andrea E. Garcia
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Each October, homeless veterans representing wars from Vietnam to Iraq walk past the lined gates at the Dixon May Fair and into a world where all become brothers again. This time,



however, they are fighting the war of being homeless.

Some dressed in fatigues, they range in ages from their 20s to their 60s, and walk around a field peppered with military tents, stopping every now and then to share stories of the days they served our country.

Now entering its ninth year, this three-day event is known as the North Bay Stand Down (NBSD), a place where hundreds of volunteers provide a “hand up” with myriad resources for homeless veterans.

“We’re making them aware of the services that are available to them in the county,” said Lynn Jewell, a member of the NBSD’s Board of Directors.

The Stand Down has already assisted hundreds of veterans since its inception in 2001 with the help of community support and numerous agencies. In 2009 alone, more than 600 volunteers assisted the veterans by making food, serving meals, setting up services, checking in veterans, providing entertainment, and answering questions.

Last October, the Stand Down welcomed 288 people, 251 of whom were veterans, and provided services from Health and Social Services, Department of Motor Vehicles and Social Security. Also available were dental and medical services, barbers, legal services, food, clothing, shoes, blankets, and hygiene kits.

“This is the most helpful resource event for homeless veterans,” said Patrick Stasio, Solano County Health and Social Services Health Assistant, who has been working with the Stand Down since 2001. “We provide everything and it’s a big part of the Stand Down. It helps an awful lot of veterans who can’t get a job or have infractions.”

But the cost to run the Stand Down continues to increase with each year. Last year, this three-day event totaled \$38,000, and was funded mainly by the Department of Labor, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Solano County Board of Supervisors.

This year, however, the North Bay Stand Down received a head start, or “hand up,” of \$2,000 from Solano Community Foundation’s Community Memorial Fund Giving Program.

“We never want to forget the service and sacrifice of our veterans,” said Stephanie Wolf, President and CEO of the Solano Community Foundation. “The Stand Down is an essential part of reaching homeless veterans and providing services, a friendly welcome, and a safe haven for men and women who are now fighting a different kind of war. We are delighted that the Community Memorial Fund grant will go toward helping so many vets.”

Each year, community members donate to the Fund as a way to memorialize a loved one, colleague, client, or friend. Donors then select a qualified nonprofit of their choice for the annual grant, which in turn is sent to the Grants Committee at SCF. The contributions result in grants to programs throughout the community that assist needy neighbors and enrich the community’s quality of life.

This year, the Grants Committee at Solano Community Foundation selected the North Bay Stand Down to receive \$2,000, an amount that will help to clothe the veterans during the cold months.

“It’s going to make a difference between buying jackets for them this year or not,” Jewell said of the water-repellent jackets. “This is the one area we would have to cut if there weren’t funds. These jackets run us about \$4,500 but the \$2,000 is enough to give us what we need to make that budget.”

The Foundation continues its mission to help the community now and for the future. Donations this year to the Community Memorial Fund Giving Program will be granted out in 2011 to a program that will assist our needy neighbors. If you would like to donate, please visit www.solanocf.org.

To help the North Bay Stand Down, please visit their site at www.nbsd.org.

Andrea E. Garcia is the Director of Communications for the Solano Community Foundation. She can be reached at 707.280.8771.