

Randolph VFW Helps Its Wounded Warriors

By Henry M. Holden

Every month, the Randolph Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Memorial Post 7333, sponsors along with several other VFW Posts a Bingo Night at the Lyons Veterans Hospital. It is their way of offering some social interaction with the veterans who are hospitalized.

It's called Bing Night, and it's held on the second Monday of each month, from September through June. "Everybody wins at this game," said Rich Reck, a Vietnam era vet. "We give out practical prizes such as T-shirts, sweatshirts, socks, and sweatpants."

Most of the patients are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that brings emo-

tional and psychological problems. Some are outpatients.

"We don't know where they go afterward, some will go home but others may not have a home to go to," said Reck.

As part of the monthly group that visits the hospital, Reck accidentally overheard a near-by conversation. The person who provided the clothing for the bingo nights had left, and some were concerned about going forward. It looked like they would have to scurry around looking for prizes for the bingo party.

Reck, who is also a deacon at Resurrection Parish, for ten years, knew what to do. "I said, I think I can do something."

As a deacon, Reck regularly visits the hospital and homebound sick had been in a prison ministry, and felt this effort fit perfectly into his diaconate.

"I knew at this point that Resurrection Parish only collected donations on Memorial Day for the traditional Poppies," he explained. "So, I approached Fr. John Tarantino, the parish administrator, with a suggestion that we ask for specific clothing to be donated by the parishioners. He was happy to support this effort."

These items should only include new socks, t-shirts, and sweat shirts which are distributed as prizes to all the patients. Size is more important than color. Socks should be 10-13 size; and

t-shirts sweat shirts should be XL - XXXL.

"It's a tremendous feeling to be able to give these veterans something that they really need," said Reck.

Reck has been in the VFW for about three-and-a-half years, but it took him almost ten years of trying to join.

"I kept being told something was missing from my DD-214," (the Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty). "I was also told that I had to be in [the military] for a specific time between 1949 and 1955." Reck was in from September 1966 to June 1968. "I finally contacted the former Post Commander, Jack Sassaman, who used my military travel and



reporting orders, and my final payment receipt, because my DD-214 was not correct."

Reck described his first

visit as eye opening.

"On my first visit to the hospital, I saw things that were very emotional
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for me," he said. "These patients have PTSD. They look healthy but some of them couldn't read or stay focused now, but could before they contracted this illness. One would hold the card but he couldn't cross off the numbers so, we had to help. Another didn't mark the card, but knew he had bingo by just looking at the card, and keeping track

of the numbers in his head. Here's the same illness, but the symptoms are so different.

"I don't think the general public is prepared for it," he added. "You have to go in there with the mindset that I'm here to help somebody who has PTSD. I don't care what you've read about it, or what you've seen about it, you don't really know it until you been with it.

"Anyone who wants to help the veterans, but doesn't know how to go about it, just get in touch with us," he said.

For more information contact VFW Post 7333 in Randolph. Call 973-945-8507 or email bill@bmenzel.com. Randolph Memorial Post 7333 serves Randolph, Mendham, Mine Hill, Chester and Dover.