

Catholic War Veterans of the USA Father Vincent Capodanno Memorial Post *To Heal, Serve, Love, Listen*

Forty-fifth Edition

est. 11/24/2015

November 2019



Father Vincent Robert Capodanno, M.M.

MEETING NOTICE NEXT MEETING IS WEDNESDAY December 4th AT 7:00 PM At Our Lady of Mercy Country Home 2115 Maturana Dr. Liberty MO 64068



O Gracious God, we give you thanks for your overflowing generosity to us. Thank you for the blessings of the food we eat and especially for this feast today. Thank you for our home and family and friends, especially for the **presence of those**

gathered here. Thank you for our health, our work and our play. Please send help to those who are hungry, alone, sick and suffering war and violence. Open our hearts to your love. We ask your blessing through Christ your son. Amen.

DUES

The dues are starting to come in, just eight more to reach 100 percent.. If you wish to become a life member, let me know. I will send you the application. The schedule of amount due, according to age, is on the application. Just fill it out and mail it to me with a check made out to our post, CWV Post 1974, for half, or all, of the amount due. I will then make out a check for the amount due National and mail that check along with the application, which I have to sign, to national and they will mail you your life membership card. Then you can pay so much a month for the rest of what is due.

Thank You

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

On November 4th, once again we ventured to Kansas City, Kansas for the annual Heart of America StandDown.

Every time I attend a stand down it really breaks my heart to so many of our fellow veterans in such desperate need. I just wonder how all those selfserving polititions who stand around collecting our taxes and spending them on their

pet projects all the while ranting and raving just how much they support our veterans.





The doors opened around 7 A.M. and the above pictures were taken around noon. Look at the line, It makes your heart break. In our country events like the Stand Downs should never be necessary.



The tables you see are the various organizations in the area that provide services for veterans from housing to financial help, to funeral arrangements, etc., even reentry assistance for veterans previously incarcerated.

We had our table set up and our fabulous service officer, Ann Puck, was able to assist several of the veterans who came buy our table. There are two Stand Downs in the Kansas City area. In the spring one is held at the St. Michael's Veterans Center located by the VA Hospital. In the fall it is held at the Memorial Hall in Kansas City, Kansas.

The Salvation Army and the Red Cross have their vans there serving hot drinks and doughnuts and biscuits and gravey until around noon when the Stand Down provides a hot lunch.

To give you some idea of the significance of the StandDowns, here are the statistics from this year's event:

537 people attended with: 91% (489) identifying as Veterans, 2.4% (13) family of Veterans and 6.5% (35) visitors to Stand Down.

Demographics of the Veterans attending: 7% (34) were Female 93% (455) were Male

Validity of ethnicity data is unreliable so not included this year. 6% (29) of the Veterans attending were OEF/OIF/OND era, with 21% (6) reporting chronically homeless, 27% (8) reporting non-chronic homeless and 52% (15) reporting non-homeless.

Age:

1% (5) identified as age 20 -29, 5% (25) identified as age 30-39, 6% (30) identified as age 40-49, 29% (144) identified as age 50-59, 44% (216) identified as age 60-69, 12% (57) identified as age 70-79, 2.4% (12) identified as age 80 and above.

Housing status for Veterans in attendance:

25% (124) of the Veterans in attendance reported homelessness, with 18% (89) reporting chronic homelessness of which 2% (2) were female (2) and 98% (87) male.

Of the non-chronic homeless Veterans 7% (35) in attendance, 95% (33) were male and 5% (2) female

Of the homeless: 40% (50) reported Living on street/car/vacant bldgs..

59% (73) reported residing in a Shelter.

18% (88) of the Veterans attending reported residing with Friends/family and 57% (278) reported residing in their own home.

Prior Stand Down Attendance:

18% (89) of the Veterans attending report participating in 5 or more stand downs

56% (272) of the Veterans attending report participating in 1-5 stand downs

18% (90) report no prior participation in stand down, with 41% (37) of the Veterans new to Stand down reporting homeless of who:

21% (8) report living with family

19% (7) report living on the street/car/abandoned bldg.

59% (22) report staying in a shelter

And 43% (39) have enrolled in VHA as evidenced by the use of a VA medical card for verification of Veteran status.

Veteran Verification:

2% (10) of the attendees reporting Veteran status at registration were unable to be verified due to no history with VHA and no ability to conduct a record search during this stand down.

The following is a comparison with the previous year:

2018: 431 people attended and 400 identified themselves as Veterans

2019: 537 people attended and 489 identified themselves as Veterans

This is a 24.4% increase of attendees and a 22.3% increase of Veterans

Veterans reporting homelessness increased from 106 to 124 for a 17% increase. The majority of this increase is likely due to the higher number of attendees in 2019.

I believe by "attendees" they mean everyone involved with the StandDown such as CWV, DAV, Catholic Charities, etc., and the homeless and needy veteras.

VETERANS DAY

This year, Col. Tony Monaco (founder and CEO of Patriot Outreach), Jack Le Roy, and I were invited to participate in the Veterans Day Celebration which was held at the Moberly Correctional Center in Moberly Missouri.

The ceremoney was very moving. After the posting of the colors, our National Anthem was beautifully sung, correctly,

by one of the veterans. Then the ceremoney consisted of a person sharing his experience, thoughts, or other related subject followed by music. The music was either one or two perple playing and singing, or, like the last one, a solo. The last musical was called "The 21 Gun Salute." It was a drum piece and the musician reminded me of Gene Kurpa playing "Let There Be Drums". And he was that good.

After all of this, three veterans received medals from the Governor. Then Col. Monaco, Chaplain Le Roy, and I were call to the podium. We were presented with hand drawn pictures, noted below.

After the ceremoney and we had several minutes to visit with the veterans and other guests. Then it was off for a tour of the Veterans Wing. This wing consists, preently, of around 65 incarcerated veterans. These gentlemen earn entrance into this wing and are bound to follow rules that somewhat differ from the general population. But, it comes with several perks. They had a wide screen TV, a computer, a micorwave, an area for games, artwork, etc.

The entire experience was extremely humbling. It was such an honor to have been asked and to have been included in the ceremoney. The security, staff, and inmates could not have been kinder, more curtious, I'm running out of adjatives.



This is the hand drawn picture which was presented to Col. Monaco and Chaplain Le Roy, both of whom served in the Army.



I receiverd this is a hand drawing of Father Capodanno. Both pictures were done by the same veteran in the Veterans Wing.

Since phones and cameras are not allowed in the prison, I have no pictures of the event.

Our Service Officer Ann Puck asked that the following links be added. If you do not have internet access you can call your local VA hospital and ask about the various services. You can also call Ann at 816 469 0271 and she can explain what they are all about

https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/manage/status https://nrd.gov/

VA uses innovative means to help reduce diabetic limb loss November is National Diabetes Month and as part of broader efforts by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to confront diabetes, Dec. 1, VA will begin regional implementation of the Podimetrics Mat, a new medical device that has the potential to prevent limb loss in Veterans with diabetes. (11/15/19)

https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/

Ann also presents a training session on Suicide Prevention. The purpose is to save lives and reduce suicidal behaviors by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training. We believe that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know. As dates, locations, and times become available I will send them out to all.

Selfish vs. Selfless When Suicide Speaks ByShon Pernice

I give numerous presentations to outside guests, about life inside prison. In one topic, Psychological Prison, I discuss the process of how an inmate is informed about the death of a loved one. I begin by asking the inmates on my panel to raise their hand if they have had a family member die while they have been incarcerated. The majority of hands go

up. I cover the inmates' notification process and possible outcome if they show any form of sadness: suicide watch in segregation. That is the worst **place to be while processing** pain. You are locked up, no sheets, only a smock to wear, nobody to talk to, no access to your personal property, and alone. You are not going to attend a funeral, like shown in the movies. Closure most likely will not start until you are released and the death becomes real. I have never had to experience that scenario in my nine years of incarceration --until now.

I called my mother on a Wednesday morning and she sounded ill. I asked if she was feeling ok and she replied, "Dalton drowned." I asked her, "What?" in disbelief. Her response was repeated the same, but in a flood of tears. She proceeded to inform me of what little details she knew. I

am stunned, not sure what to do? How to feel? Or, what my purpose is? It felt like I was punched in the stomach and the sinister feeling of impending doom begins.

My daughter, the one thing I hold dear to my very existence, got married on Saturday, flew to Florida on Sunday for her honeymoon, and had to witness the last moments of her new husbands life on Tuesday. In addition, she almost lost her life attempting to rescue her soul mate. My son-in-law was taken off this earth just as he was about to embark on a new chapter in his life. How much trauma can a 22 year old, newlywed, college student endure? And why?

I try to process this on a prison telephone, in an open area, and do my best to suppress my tears. On top of the surge of emotions, there is still situation awareness of where I am: prison. When others see you sad, they ask questions. I do not want to be pestered with, "What's

wrong?" Another point to consider is that I am in.shark-infested waters, surrounded by

swindlers and predators. My tears are drops of blood in this sea of carnivores. My pain becomes another's gain if I am not careful.

As a parent, you want to protect your children, and comfort them when they hurt. I am a combat veteran and would do anything to shield my kids from witnessing an unnatural death. The baggage is far too great and the emotional wounds may take a lifetime to heal. Death is a strict teacher. Its rules are unflinching and do not care what you think about fairness. In my situation, the burning of failure penetrates my soul. I cannot comfort my daughter due to my wrong choices in life.

Mind Fields

Suicidal ideation is no stranger to me. My pain is unbearable right now, I have zero control, and death will take it all away. The one thing I do have control over is my own life. I want some morsel of control back. If I kill myself, I will be free of the failure of a father that I am. I also blame myself for this horrible event. I am incarcerated for manslaughter. I killed my wife. Is this God's punishment? Is this an "eye for an eye" or "the sins of the father" type of stuff that I have seen on Sunday morning television? Is my daughter's pain, and loss, due to my past behavior? I think it is. Does my daughter blame me? In my current frame of mind, not being able to get a hold of family, or leave messages, the answer is YES. Access to a firearm at this very moment= solution.

The rays of living are eclipsed. I want a divorce from life. Divorces are acceptable and this terminology make it ok. 6As unhealthy choices are being planned, I start brainstorming what resources are available to end my life. This is the planning phase. There is no quick way out (suicide) in the

prison setting, but it has been accomplished in the past. I know what I must do.

I find myself trapped in a thick darkness from which it feels there is no escape. My heart has been ripped out and my soul is missing. I am a zombie, a hollow bag of skin. I hurt in such a way that intense physical pain would be a relief. I am focused on the here and now and the most obvious consequences to my actions do not register. My loss of control backs me into a

corner as my mental calculations, and reasoning, become primitive. I want control back, my life is control, so I will take it.

As a former soldier, and combat medic, I am familiar with fearlessness. Who do I reach out to when I am use to being the one they call for help? A sentence in the Soldier's Creed states, "I will always place the mission first." If my mission is to end my life, that is my priority now. I become consumed with tunnel vision. This may be one explanation why active duty military, and veterans, has a high success rate with suicide. There are approximately 20 suicides a day in this category of our population. (Source: VA National Suicide Data Report

2005-2016)

When I made the decision to kill myself, my senses, although numb in appearance, are hypersensitive to justification. Even after I have decided to die, I still listen to key words, expressions, and body language of those I encounter. If I sense that you don't care: a wrong blink, looks, word, or laugh-that's confirmation of my devalue. I'm actively looking for: someone to disregard me...proof that I'm worthless; not believe that I hurt...I'll show them; or treat me like a victim...I'll be a victim soon enough. The questions of, "Are you ok?" or "How are you doing?" are worthless and you will get a one word response every time. You already know something is wrong with me. Don't be stupid. If you ask, "Do you want to harm yourself', you get the big fat lie of "nope." You are not going to lock me up, punish me, prevent me from killing myself, or poor babying me. However, the question of, "How bad are you?", will get my attention. You verified my world of pain, you respect it, and now I am challenged to think about an answer. I have to process this question, from my dark place, due to the fact I do not have an automatic reply for it. No one word bullshit answer. That is your open door to buy me some time. My invisible walls must be breeched before the inevitable.

On the mission to end my life, I still seek rationalization to reinforce my decision. I made a few telephone calls to non-family members that would not be biased. One resource walked me through the Bible verses that were my fixation. (One of the justifications to kill myself.) He searched for it while we spoke and then educated me on the context of the whole story, not the eternal damnation of a single verse. That lowered the threat level a notch, but I still want out. I am reacting, in desperation, caused by intense emotional pain.

I call resource #2 and tell of my daughter's tragedy. After hearing me out, as I talked in circles, he expressed empathy, but then spoke of a story I recently wrote? I mean come on! My new son-in-law drowned, daughter witnessed it, and I am done living. And this guy is talking about one of my stories? That confused the heck out of my one sided thought process and emotions. That sly individual took my focus off the grave, momentarily, and I have to process. one of my accomplishments. Someone just bought me more air to inhale as my focused shifted. I had no clue what was going on in our conversation, as I wanted to go back to the tragedy. The refocus was a condiment in the recipe for my survival. At no point did I tell anyone of my intention to kill myself.

I spoke to staff soon after I had discovered the horrible news. This was when I was deep in the hunt for justification. I was offered to speak with mental health and the answer was premeditated, "no". I just wanted to die. However, after speaking to those previous resources, I gave in and informed staff that I was willing to see a counselor. I wanted to see my mental health specialist just one more time. The next day, during my appointment, another key discovery gave me purpose. It was brought to light that I may be the only person my daughter can relate to since I have been intimate with death during the war. I may be the only person she can connect with. Now, I have synapse firing in parts of my brain that were shut down. The mental walls have been breached. She may need me. Enough said! I can honestly say that mental health, and their bag of tricks, interrupted my path to suicide.

After several people refused to give up on me when my depression made loving me a task, it came down to this: Yes, I hurt bad, I blame myself, and this pain isn't going away anytime soon so do not minimize it. Let's talk fairness. The main reason I cannot end my life right now is due to the question of..." Could my daughter, a 22 year old widow, handle two funerals in a week? And due to my actions?" I cannot do that to her. Not now anyway. So I need a purpose, a mission (I am a soldier).

- 1. Start asking outside organizations, churches, veterans groups, and anyone else if they could send a card, or money, to support my daughter. Asking for addresses, letter writing, and phone calls takes focus and determination.
- 2. Call my daughter. Utilize my experiences battling PTSD and trauma to be a mentor, friend, and part of her support system.
- 3. Obtain a sympathy card. The best one I can find. Go to the chapel, get the word out to other offenders that will buy one, or have someone make me one.
- 4. Write every detail of this experience down. Offer insight into my self-destructive thought process. It may save someone's life and be of use to mental health professionals.

After I complete this mission, then I will revisit the need to end my life.

After Action Report

As a former non-commissioned officer (NCO), the standard US soldier, airmen, sailor, or Marine isn't going to respond readily to terms like: co-morbid conditions, cognitive strategies, and psychoanalysis. Those words are for mental health professionals at their meetings. That is like trying to understand cryptology, or nuclear propulsion, for us boots on ground type warriors. I prefer rock drills and plain talk.

My previous situation of despair will be discussed by utilizing three popular military war movies: Top Gun (1986), Flight of the Intruder{- 1990}, and Behind Enemy Lines (2001). Those films ignite the senses, and emotions; with adrenaline, fear, anticipation, death, and will to survive. Those fighter jets are an awesome display of firepower and strength. The pilots operating the aircraft are admirable, and fearless, until the danger zone is reached. When enemy fire strikes your life source (aircraft), it becomes sensory overload. Army term: a significant emotional event (it scares the crap out of you). Your mind is bombarded with flashing lights, beeps, emergency

messages, and radio traffic of impending doom. You have the choices to fix

the problem, pull the ejection lever, or crash to your death in the blaze of glory. But, when tunnel vision takes over, and you aren't breathing oxygen effectively, death is imminent. Pride, embarrassment, fear, or pain may be the reason you forget about your lifeline of ejecting. Life is a blur until a hint of reason can pull you out of the tailspin. I am not reading the gauges right, and the parachute is under my seat, but I don't realize it is there. However, even when I eject and the chute opens, I still have to navigate issues, identify problems, and tend to my injuries.

In Behind Enemy Lines, actor Own Wilson is shot down in Serbia. He was being hunted by a sadistic foreign army, had just witnessed the execution of his co-pilot, was battling the environmental elements, and was in a country where friend and foe was a blur. The scene where Wilson was speaking to his commanding officer, actor Gene Hackman. after a failed rescue attempt, Hackman sensed Wilson's despair and loss of hope. That equates to death. Hackman pauses (on his radio), then engages Wilson with a series of petty questions concerning Wilson's gear. Wilson's hostile surroundings did not matter, the murder he witnessed hours earlier, or the delay in his evacuation. Only his essential gear to survive, the items he possessed, was his immediate focus. That redirection gave Wilson just enough focus to push through the despair and live a little longer. The small items he did have control over were significant enough for another hour of living. Sound familiar? What resource #2 did? He deflected my current state of mind even though I felt the tragedy should be the immediate focus. That bought time. In suicidal ideation, the clock is ticking. Buying time, buying life, opens the door to be able to have a glimpse at my purpose.

In a sharp contrast to what we learn in the Soldier's Creed, "I will never accept defeat", the failed mission to end my life is the one comprise to take pleasure in being unsuccessful. Suicide is a virus, it makes you sick mentally, and it infects others.

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

Albert Schweitzer

The next page is the semiannual VAVS report which we turn into National after the first of the year. Look it over and if you have any contributions, i.e., time, money, travel, etc., to submit please let Ann or I know so we can add it to the report.



CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, INC.

National Headquarters

237-20 92nd Rd Bellerose, NY 11426

Telephone: (703) 549 – 3622

National Welfare Officer Ro	eport Fo	rm	For Mem	nbership	Year		
For Reporting Period – check one			15 – December 31		January 1 – June 15		
	First Half Report Due: January 15				Second Half Report Due: June 20		
Report from Echelon – check one	Post		Chapter	Dept	N	lame or #	
Welfare Officer's Name							
Printed Mailing Address							
Type of Service / Program	Hrs spent - with travel		*Time Value (hrs x \$24.14)	# Memb		Am't Spent or donated	Donated items value - not money
VOLUNTEER & ASSISTANCE							
VAVS – VA Medical Center							
VAVS – VA Outpatient Clinic							
VA Parties for patients, residents							
Care Packages							
Greeting / Sympathy Cards							
Vet Fairs, Stand Downs, Homeless				_			
Referrals to Service Officer							
SPIRITUAL & HONORS				l			
Parish Veteran Ministry							
Hospice, nursing home, sick visit							
Assist Chaplain							
Honor Guard							
Blue/Gold Ceremony							
Decorate Graves				 			
OTHER WELFARE ACTIVITIES				_			
Family/Military Support Groups							
Support for needy families							
Community Service							
TOTALS:							
NOTE Volunteer hours are w	orth \$24.	69 ea	ch ONLY IF	the volur	iteer ser	vice provid	ed is something

the receiving entity would have otherwise had to pay someone to do.

Form Disposition

Report must go to ALL Echelons

Welfare Officers - send a copy of Report to ALL higher Echelon Welfare Officers. (send one copy to each - Chapter, Department and National Welfare Officers). Follow the Reporting Requirements listed in the National Welfare Officer Program.

••