



# THE NVF NEWS

## THE LIFELINE FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS

Memorial Day 2017

### NVF Gives Away 24,000 New Lands' End Clothes to Vets



*Juma Rafiki (VA), Micheal Washington, Shad Meshad and Nikki Baker (VA)*



*NVF Staff Mary Ann Mayer, Shad Meshad, Bill Morgan*



*NVF's Mary Ann Mayer helps vets select.*



*Gerald Hillard, NVF unloads Lands' End donation.*

**On February 3, Veterans began lining up at 8:00 AM** at the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) in West Los Angeles. VA staff and volunteers set up tents to shield Veterans from the rain. The NVF distributed 24,000 pieces of new Lands' End clothing that day. Volunteers and staff from the NVF and the VA handed out jackets, sweaters, shirts, pants and dresses.

**Lands' End contacted the NVF before Veterans Day**, wanting to donate a truckload of new clothing to veterans in need. A week later they donated another truckload and also generously contributed \$10,000 to the NVF.

**The NVF looked for an opportunity to give most of the clothes to Veterans in a single event.** NVF Resource Director Mike Washington reached out to James "Juma" Egler at the VA's Community Engagement and Reintegration Services about doing a joint event on the VA's West LA Campus. Juma got Nikki Baker, Associate Chief of Public and Congressional Relations on board and the event came together quickly.

**On the NVF Clothing Giveaway Team were Micheal Washington, Director of Resources; Gerald Hillard, Information Services Representative; and Bill Morgan, Director of Development.** Mike and Gerald handled unloading the shipments from Lands' End. Gerald and a team of VA volunteers unloaded the clothing at the event. NVF's Women Outreach Coordinators Mary Ann Mayer and Leahy Khim and our Founder & President Shad Meshad helped sort and distribute items.

**The National Veterans Foundation's work, at its core, helps Veterans transition successfully to civilian life.** Many vets struggle with their transition. New, high quality clothing like the gift from Lands' End provided hundreds of Veterans with a potential new job interview outfit or warm clothing during this wet California winter.

**"The Lands' End clothing giveaway with the Greater Los Angeles VA was amazing," said NVF President and Founder Shad Meshad.** "It was a huge opportunity to help veterans. The VA team really came out in full force with the location, volunteers, publicity and logistical support to make the event a huge success. Our team couldn't have done it without them. But none of this would have happened without the overwhelming generosity of Lands' End. This event really shows the power of partnering. Together we really made a difference!"

## LANDS'END *Thank You, Lands' End!*

The Lifeline for Veterans • 888 777-4443 • [www.nvf.org](http://www.nvf.org) • [vetsupport@nvf.org](mailto:vetsupport@nvf.org)

Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm Pacific Standard Time • If you know a veteran or family that needs help, contact us today.

*We've moved! Our new address is: 5777 West Century Boulevard Suite 350 Los Angeles, California 90045-5656*

## Women Vets Kickbox to Wellness and Connection

Who better to lead the first NVF Women Vets Kickboxing event than our own USMC veteran Leaphy Khim, Women Veterans Outreach Coordinator?



Women Veterans Outreach Coordinator Leaphy Khim

“Being fit and having the support of a community is an important part of wellness,” she said. “We put this event together to do both those things.”

The NVF partnered with Foxy and Fierce Kickboxing Bootcamp in Hollywood. The event opened with networking as participants filled a “goodie bag” with pamphlets and flyers on women veterans’ resources and benefits. They

chatted informally over hot coffee and snacks, then Khim spoke to them about the NVF’s mission, highlighting our focus on female veterans. Too often, women veterans lack support because they don’t self-identify as veterans. This can lead to a downward spiral as they try to re-enter the civilian world. Heads nodded in agreement as Leaphy talked about a loss of identity after leaving the military.



And then the fun began. Leaphy led them through a strenuous 45-minute workout that included punching, kicking and a partner/team-based workout.

Khim believes that the partnering/team component helps build the same camaraderie experienced in the service. After the workout the women sat together in a circle on the floor, stretching and cooling down. Each woman in turn told a little bit about herself, her challenges, and the



changes she hoped to achieve from this experience. None of the women had known each other before the event, but afterwards, these vets felt connected to each other. Flush from the event’s success, Leaphy’s already planning the next class.

## Poverty: Too Often a Barrier for Women Vets

Women’s Outreach Director Mary Ann Mayer, MSW has been fielding calls from women veterans for several months now. She notes the high incidence of poverty as an issue and a barrier for women vets. To begin with, female veterans have a lower median household income than male veterans, according to a March 2016 report from the VA.



Women Veterans Outreach Director Mary Ann Mayer

Coming out of the military, women vets lose their community. In the crucial initial transition period, the support of friends who share your experience is a rich resource most women vets don’t have. That can be isolating. In addition, most female vets don’t self-identify as having served. Sometimes it’s because they suffer from MST-induced PTSD, often with combat-related PTSD.

Deployments are hard on relationships, marriages and families. When a woman leaves military service, a lot of change has to happen in a compressed time frame: new location, new job, new housing. A woman veteran can find herself unable to work long hours or hold sustained employment because of PTSD. Being unable to find meaningful employment or child care raises yet another set of circumstances to navigate. So many of these women vets are strong, proven former soldiers who need just a bit of help over a rough patch. When that help doesn’t arrive, they can slip into a steady decline that leads to homelessness and despair.

Mayer feels like she is sometimes the last line of defense for a woman who calls our Lifeline for Vets. “By the time a woman vet calls me, she has typically been out of the service for a number of years, and her life has already spiraled downwards. We are working hard to reach women who are transitioning out of the military, so that we can assist with resources before a spiral happens.”

The NVF participates in the LA Collaborative, so we’re in touch with local and state agencies who can help. Trying to locate resources for a woman in a rural part of Minnesota, for example, can be difficult. It takes patience and persistence. “But each time I solve the puzzle,” Mayer says, “we identify another resource to add to what we offer all veterans. We’re helping to weave a larger, stronger safety net.”



## NVF Former Outreach Director Featured in Empower our Vets Video

**By telling veterans' stories – stories of success, of overcoming challenges, of pride in their service – Empower Our Vets draws attention to the power and strength of the men and women of the armed services.** Recently, they featured our own MSgt. (RET.) Kristine Hesse, a 24-year Air Force veteran.

**After her retirement, Hesse worked with The Mission Continues, an organization that deploys veterans in communities.** Kristine knew she wanted to work with veterans after she completed her degree in social work. She was paired with the NVF, where she created an outreach program targeting women veterans. Hesse



*MSgt. (RET.) Kristine Hesse*

served as its Director until last August, and now serves on the NVF Advisory Board. Still active in the veteran community, she's exactly where you'd expect to find her—out in the field working with veterans and their families as part of the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at USC.

**Empower Our Vets put it this way:** “MSgt. Hesse has made it her mission to provide support to transitioning service members with a focus on the specific challenges that female veterans face.”

**You can view the video on our website:** [www.nvf.org/outreach](http://www.nvf.org/outreach)

**When taken as a whole, media and imagery of US veterans tends to focus on the extensive challenges they faced while serving, and the continued challenges when they return home.** While these stories are very important to tell, the narrative of success and pride is just as powerful – if not more so. Telling these stories educates non-veterans about the power of service and, more importantly, provides hope and knowledge to other veterans who might be struggling with the issues many face when returning home.

### Looking for Resources for Women Vets

**Former NVF Women's Outreach Coordinator Kristine Hesse commented on the power of emergency financial assistance.** “Even a small amount of money at the right time can make a huge difference,” she said. “I wish the major hotel chains knew what a difference a voucher for one night's shelter can sometimes make, especially in a large urban area. It might allow a woman who depends on public transportation

to be at a job interview early the next morning. Same thing for gas cards or grocery store cards, even in small amounts.” Identifying donors who can make those small bridges possible is a priority. If you're in a position to help, please go to our website [www.nvf.org](http://www.nvf.org) and use the **Donate** button on our home page.

## NVF Call Center Stories

### Vermont

**The Lifeline for Vets is here for all veterans and their families.** Women's Outreach Coordinator Mary Ann Mayer received a call from an elderly, housebound widow in a rural area of Vermont, whose husband was a decorated Navy Vietnam veteran. Since his death six years ago, her only income is a small social security stipend. Winter expenses are typically higher and she was having trouble paying her bills. Lacking central heating, **she called because she needed firewood and couldn't afford it.**



*Women Veterans Outreach Director Mary Ann Mayer*

Mary Ann says it's the first call for firewood that she's received. Initially she wasn't sure she would be able to do anything about it, but she researched, called around and found the Northeast Kingdom Community Action Youth Network in Newport, VT. Their heating coordinator, April, called the widow to let her know firewood was on the way. The Network was also able to assist with her utility bills.

### Florida

**NVF Counselor Steve Duby knew he had only moments to establish some kind of connection to the vet on the other end of the line.**

The caller was in tears, saying he was thinking of ending his life. Steve drew him out in conversation. A Navy vet, his job in Vietnam had been to transport forces to shore in “a war we already knew we weren't going to win.” He felt responsible



*Information Service Rep Steve Duby*

*continued on next page*

## NVF Call Center Stories

for leading good men to slaughter. The hostile greeting he received on returning home still stung. He now had medical issues and no one to help him access care. His family was distancing themselves. There was trouble between his girlfriend and his family. He felt not only in the middle, but terribly alone. He just wanted to get away from it all. Ending his life seemed like the thing to do.

**Steve assured him that these things could be worked out.** He just needed to connect with people who could help and who could relate to what he had experienced. Steve called a friend of his, a Vietnam vet, now a veteran advocate, who lives about 50 miles away from the vet. Together Steve and his friend got the veteran to a Vet Center where other people are helping him get the medical care he needs. Steve says the vet is “taking one day at a time.” He calls back periodically “just to shoot the breeze.”

### Alabama

**A Vietnam Veteran called in desperate need of repairs to his only source of transportation.** He relies on his truck to



*Information Service Rep  
Greg Flowers*

get him to his VA appointments, 50 miles round trip. His truck has an attached camper: home for this vet. NVF Counselor Greg Flowers reached out to Veteran organizations in his area. American Legion Post 255 in Fultondale, Alabama came through. After talking with Greg, the Chapter Commander visited the Veteran. He sat and spoke with the Veteran and learned that there were other

pressing issues—unpaid bills and a non-working refrigerator that needed replacing. Post 255 helped him with auto repairs, purchased new tires for the truck and replaced the refrigerator. The post is slowly helping him pay off some of his past due bills. The NVF and the American Legion came together to help make this Veteran’s future look a little brighter.

## Shad Meshad Recognized for Superior Achievement in Social Work

***Social Work Today*, the nation’s leading newsmagazine for Social Workers, names NVF Founder & President Shad Meshad in its list of Top Ten social workers in the Jan/Feb 2017 issue.** The award is especially prestigious because these top ten are nominated by their peers, colleagues and mentors.

**Meshad earned his MSW at Florida State University, then went into the Army and Vietnam.** The article features Shad’s background and history as co-founder of the VA’s Vet

Centers and founder of the Vietnam Veterans Aid Foundation, which later became the NVF. To date, the NVF’s crisis hotline, the Lifeline for Vets, has served over 400,000 veterans.

**Shad’s quoted: “There’s still so much work to do.** We often find vets who are suffering but have never filed a claim... I’m not one to sit back and just talk about these problems. **I’m an activist and I will always be one.”** Forty years on, Shad says he “hasn’t stopped.”

## *Until We Get Home*—a Must-See Film

**The National Veterans Foundation is proud to present a new veteran suicide prevention short film.** Written and directed by Scott McCullough and produced by Windy Buhler and Edge of Reason Productions, the film features well-known actor, activist and NVF Honorary Board Member, Martin Sheen. Award-winning director Scott McCullough and producer Windy Buhler created *Until We Get Home* in response to the horrifying number of veteran suicides. In simple settings, in their own voices, vets talk about suicide in a way the public rarely has a chance to hear.



**Appearing with Sheen (who also appears in NVF public service announcements) are veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.** Among them, Sgt. Major Jesse Acosta, who’s been a subject of one of our *Huffington Post* blogs. The film also includes actors from the play *Ajax in Iraq*, a drama that braids the story of men and women vets in Iraq with the story of the Greek hero Ajax.

***Until We Come Home* presents dialog from vets that is unflinching and direct.** The film carries its message in a way that is riveting. Dedicated to NVF Founder Shad Meshad for his 45 years of service to vets, the film is visually arresting and powerful. You can view it (and you should if you haven’t seen it) on our website: <http://nvf.org/until-we-get-home/>

**Scott McCullough and Wendy Buhler use their creativity and dedication as artists and veteran activists to help make it possible for us to do what we do.** We are so grateful to them, to Martin Sheen and to the other veterans who participated. Make sure you see this film.



## Live from the Lifeline for Vets

It's just an ordinary day in the office, but Wendell Guillermo's elbows are on the desk and his head is bowed in tight concentration as he walks a caller through the multi-page form in front of him on his desk. You get the sense of how confusing this paperwork can be when Wendell says, "The second page itself, is the application." He pinches the bridge of his nose while his caller is probably making a note, then he continues. "Alright." Now they're on the same page. "So the third page," he pauses, "the third page is where you send the application, but it depends on what branch of service and when you served. It gives you a number and that number matches the address where you have to send the application."

In front of Wendell, Steve DUBY is on the phone with a caller, recommending a referral with a phone number that ends "...7-8-4-0." He speaks clearly and slowly. "Yes, ma'am." Pause. "And then the other one is a Matt Taylor..." Not just one resource but at least two. Steve's reading off his monitor, but you can see him check his cell phone as well.

**This is how days on the Lifeline go.** Queries on DD-214's, on how to correct "bad paper" (a less-than-honorable discharge), where to find a Veteran Services Officer, legal or financial help, housing. If we get a call from a female vet, Mary Ann or Leaphy may take it. If it's a crisis call, we refer to social workers Mary Ann and Shad. The phones don't stop. We'd love to expand our hours of service. That's where you can help. Go to [www.nvf.org](http://www.nvf.org) and use that DONATE button! You can watch our video [nvf.org/live-lifeline-for-vets](http://nvf.org/live-lifeline-for-vets) to see Wendell and Steve in action.



*Captain for Dark Mornings*, Shad Meshad's personal Vietnam War memoir is available in paperback for only \$25.

All proceeds go to The National Veterans Foundation.

Order your copy today!

Call 888-777-4443

Since 1985, The National Veterans Foundation (NVF) has been a leading resource for more than 400,000 veterans and their family members. Our experienced team of trained professionals includes veterans of Vietnam, the Cold War, Iraq and Afghanistan who understand first-hand the issues facing today's veterans and their families. Our sole purpose is to help you get the help you need as quickly as possible.

### MISSION OF THE NATIONAL VETERANS FOUNDATION

To serve the crisis management, information and referral needs of all U.S. veterans and their families through:

1. Operation of the nation's only vet to vet toll-free helpline for all veterans and their families.
2. Public awareness programs that shine a consistent public spotlight on the human needs facing American veterans and their families.
3. Ongoing outreach to connect homeless and low income veterans with food, clothing, transportation and other essential resources.

The National Veterans Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

All contributions are fully tax deductible.

### OUR TEAM

**Shad Meshad**, MSW, LCSW, CTS, TFTdx: President  
**Micheal Washington**: Director of Resources  
**Rich Rudnick**: Director of Operations  
**Leaphy Khim**: Women Veterans Coordinator  
**Bill Morgan**: PR & Development Specialist  
**Cathie Sandstrom Smith**: Editor, Writer

**Wendell Guillermo**: Information Services  
**Gerald Hillard**: Information Services  
**Steve DUBY**: Information Services  
**Greg Flowers**: Information Services  
**Mary Ann Mayer**: Women Veterans Coordinator

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