

March 2022

**Our mission is to educate the Veteran community and support quality care and benefits for all Veterans in the VA Healthcare System.**

**Next Meeting:** Perhaps late summer or early autumn~ At the Oak Park Library, Oak Park, IL

## Message from the VU Executive Committee

*In this newsletter, we remember Florence Rooney, widow of Jim, who passed away on December 24, 2021. Florence, member of VU, volunteered at Hines VA Hospital and was active in her community with Auxiliaries of Berwyn VFW, American Legion, Elks and DAV. Dear Florence, may you rest in peace. We will miss your smile!*

### **Our VP and Treasurer in VU:**

Steve, Vice President, and Diana, Treasurer, are calling members as a point of contact. So answer that phone! Special thanks to our members for their endless support! And don't forget your dues ~ only \$20 a year.

### **Update on Congressional Bills:**

**HR = in the House of Representatives**    **S = in the Senate**

**HR 914** ~ This dental care bill, originally HR 96 (2019), was reintroduced in the House of Representatives on 2-8-2021 by Julia Brownley (D-CA) and currently has 51 co-sponsors. Please call your Congressman/woman **today** to request their co-sponsorship. **Call 866-220-0044 Toll Free number to Congress:** Either a live operator or automated voice will ask you for your zip code and then give you options of the congressman whose district includes that zip code. When you are connected to your congressman, ask for the legislative aide and tell them you request that your congressman co-sponsor Bill HR 914. Please contact family and friends out of state and other veterans' organizations to which you may belong regarding this bill: we need a **lot more** co-sponsors. Help us get the word out now. And make that phone call now!

**HR 914 would furnish dental care in the same manner as medical care in the VA.**

**S 3017** ~ On October 20, 2021, Bernie Sanders (I-Vt) introduced the **Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act of 2021** in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. Co-sponsors: R Blumenthal (D-Conn), C Booker (D-NJ), K Gillibrand (D-NY), M Hirono (D-Hawaii), B Menendez (D-NJ), D Stabenow (D-MI), S Whitehouse (D-RI). This bill with the Veterans State Eligibility Standardization Act of 2021 will ensure universal dental coverage for all veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and eliminate long-standing barriers to health care for veterans across the country. The VA has reported that out of the 9.2 million veterans enrolled in VA health care, only about 1.4 million are eligible for comprehensive dental care. In 2020, VA dental services managed to care for only 402,000 eligible veterans, as well as an additional 61,000 due to medical need. Due to the 2020 COVID pandemic with a decrease in veterans' enrollment and compensation and pension exams, there is an estimated backlog of 2.5 million dental procedures. **S 3017** will also address the shortage of dentists in the US by incentivizing dental school enrollment and service to our nation's veterans and ensures the VA maintains dental clinics in all states.

VU members: now is the time to also contact your Senators in Washington DC to co-sponsor this bill. **Call 866-220-0044 Toll Free number to Congress.** Request to be connected with your senator, ask for the legislative aide and request they co-sponsor S 3017.

**Update on the Crisis Line.** On 10-17- 2020, Bill S2661 "National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020" was signed by the president which mandated "9-8-8" as the new universal crisis number by 2022.

There are three ways to contact assistance for the veteran or family in need: The current **Veterans Crisis Line** is **1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1**; OR **Confidential Crisis Chat** at VeteransCrisisLine.net; OR **Text** 838255.

**The Crisis Line for civilians: 1-800-273-8255.** Remember: the Crisis Line is for those who are not only having thoughts of harming themselves, but also for those with feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, sadness. For more information about the SAVE program or other questions, please contact the Suicide Prevention Team at Hines VA 708-202-8387, x24096 or x22805.

**Springfield NEWS:** A bill to fund Illinois' new mental health hotline passed the (state) Senate Mental Health committee last month. The Federal Communications Commission has required all 50 states to create 9-8-8 as a shortcut to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline by July 16, 2022. Illinois created a law establishing 9-8-8 last year and is now trying to secure funding for the state to field calls once the hotline opens. State Senator Laura Fine (D-Glenview) sponsored the bill which could provide both a shorter and easy to remember number to connect more people in crisis and will also remove the burden from law enforcement who can focus on public safety. The goal is to have calls handled by phone operators who will have the ability to send social workers in severe cases. In 2020, 1,488 individuals committed suicide in Illinois. The bill was unanimous in committee and now can go to the Senate floor once session resumes.

**Update on our first Chicago Veterans' Nursing Home:** 200 single-occupancy rooms. Application process continues ~ opening was last month. The Illinois Veterans Home Chicago, 4250 N Oak Park Avenue, Chicago IL 60634, is operated by the State of Illinois Veterans Affairs. Minimum requirements include being honorably discharged from the US armed forces, requiring skilled nursing care, has service credited to Illinois or has resided in Illinois for at least one year. For more information: Ana Huivar 773-824-3731 and Maureen Hartigan, Public Information Officer, Illinois Dept. of Veterans' Affairs, 312-814-7260 / 773-590-9848. For staffing information including nursing, dietary, housekeeping: 773-824-3876.

**National Vietnam War Veterans Day:** Commemoration on Tuesday March 29, 2022 at 11AM. Location: Higgins and Milwaukee Veterans Monument, Chicago. Host: Billy Caldwell Post 806 and the Jefferson Park Chamber of Commerce.

**NAVAL Air Station Museum ~** 2040 Lehigh Avenue, Glenview, IL 60026. Weekend hours: contact 847-657-000. Website: [www.hangarone.org](http://www.hangarone.org) \* Irv Danneil, our president, is a volunteer.

**"Help Heal Veterans":** 615 W Roosevelt, Maywood IL 60153 ~ directly across from Hines VA Hospital  
Contact Rose Schmidt, Craft Care Specialist, at 708-356-6243 or [chicago1@healvets.org](mailto:chicago1@healvets.org)  
Community based program, serving veterans since 1971, offers a wide selection of craft kits – leather and painting as examples - to walk-in veterans. Parking on site in strip mall.

**"ONE"** by Joseph Lempa, VN vet  
One tree begins a forest  
One star can guide a ship  
One candle wipes out darkness  
One hand-clasp lifts a soul  
One smile begins a friendship  
One sunbeam can light a room  
One hope will raise our spirits  
One laugh can conquer gloom  
One word does start each prayer  
One touch can show you care  
One voice can speak with wisdom  
One heart can know what's true  
One life can make the difference.  
You see, it's up to you!



Bella Hana, Steve's feline, shares afghan by Jeanette

**Veterans for Unification** is a not for profit 501c (3) organization. Address: 805 Lake Street, #198, Oak Park, IL 60301.  
Wash your hands ~ wear a mask ~ practice social distancing. ~ get vaccinated

**Check out our website:** [veteransforunification.org](http://veteransforunification.org)

**For more info: 773-725-9323**



# Membership Form

I wish to: (Check one)      Apply for a new membership to Veterans for Unification.  
Renew my membership to Veterans for Unification.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work)

(Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:     Veteran  
                   Associate (non-veteran)

**Membership fee:**

\$20/Year

Membership fee: ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would also like to make a tax  
deductible donation to VU: .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks or money order payable to:  
Veterans for Unification

Please mail your completed membership application form and  
payment to:

VETERANS FOR UNIFICATION  
805 LAKE STREET #198  
OAK PARK IL 60301