

NASA



## Education News

**Mark your calendars! The next Stand Down will be held on October 8 and 9, 2007, at YMCA Camp Algonquin, 1889 Cary Road, Algonquin, IL 60012. Phone us toll free at 866-338-4968 (866-EDU-4YOU) for more information.**

*A Publication of National Association of Systems Administrators Education Corporation*

## Thanks to all who made Stand Down March 2007 a success!

National Association of Systems Administrators Education Corporation (NASA Education) wishes to thank everyone who came together for the area's homeless veterans on March 5 and 6, 2007, at YMCA Camp Algonquin in Algonquin, Illinois.

As a result of the Stand Down, 32 homeless veterans received a number of essential services that included medical screenings by a team from North Chicago VA Medical Center; employment services by the Veterans Employment and Training Service/U.S. Department of Labor; assistance from area veterans service officers in applying for VA benefits, DD214s, and social security benefits; and information from a number of community organizations to assist them in pulling themselves out of poverty.

In the 30 days since the Stand Down, five of the veteran participants have received competitive wage jobs, four have received permanent housing, eleven received legal counseling from Jeffrey Antonelli, an attorney from the Law Firm of Gene Hanson Ltd. in Chicago and Jennifer Gelman and Janet Douglass of Prairie State Legal Services; and two were given food vouchers. Dr. Steven Kamps of Algonquin Dental Associates and Dr. Tim Stierneman, Dr. Audrey Stierneman and Dr. Christina Sehy of All Smiles Dental in Algonquin, Illinois, provided dental appointments with follow-up services for five homeless veterans.

"The work with the veterans is ongoing," said John Blanchard, executive director of NASA Education. "It doesn't stop when the main Stand Down is over. Our objective is to help the veterans find permanent shelter,



*L. Tammy Duckworth, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, meets with John Blanchard, NASA Education executive director, before the Stand Down program.*

competitive wage jobs and all the other services they need to live on their own."

Veteran participants received meals on both days and were offered overnight shelter on Monday in the residence hall at YMCA Camp Algonquin where they enjoyed snacks provided by veterans' organizations, area grade school students and the Girl Scouts of America as they watched satellite TV. Volunteer hairstylists Krissy Olszewski of Chazio's Salon, Algonquin; Wendy Webber, SportClips Haircuts in McHenry; and Tracy Fafinski, SportClips Haircuts in Rolling Meadows, gave the veterans free haircuts on Monday. All of the Stand Down participants were offered coats, clothes, underwear, socks, shoes,

toiletry kits and other items.

L. Tammy Duckworth, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, addressed the veterans before an audience composed of veterans, volunteers and the media to urge veterans to accept the help of a grateful community, state and nation for their contribution in protecting and serving their country.

"We're former military and we're tough," said Director Duckworth, who holds the rank of Major in the Illinois Army Guard and was shot down in 2004 while co-piloting a Black Hawk helicopter north of Baghdad. "We don't want to admit we need

*(Continued on page 3)*





*The color guard from VFW Post 4600, Fox River/McHenry, Illinois opened the program on Monday, March 5, 2007, at the Stand Down for Homeless Veterans at YMCA Camp Algonquin. Speakers were L. Tammy Duckworth, the Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs; Illinois Senator Pamela Althoff, and John Blanchard, executive director of NASA Education, the sponsoring organization.*

*Jason Keller, who served in Iraq and was discharged from military service in January, converses with Director Duckworth, who was shot down in 2004 while co-piloting a Black Hawk helicopter north of Baghdad.*





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*(Continued from page 1)*  
help from anyone.”

Even so, she urged veterans to register with the VA for benefits and let a grateful nation provide them with the assistance they need to move ahead with their lives.

“You’ve paid for it,” she stressed. “You’ve earned it. Let us help you now.”

She announced that Illinois has created a new lottery game called Veterans Cash. Veterans Cash is the first instant lottery ticket in Illinois Lottery history where 100% of the proceeds will go to support the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, which will award grants, fund additional services or conduct research on veterans’ issues in Illinois.

To encourage companies to hire veterans, the State of Illinois will offer a \$600.00 tax deduction to employers of veterans who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan and were hired after January, 2007.

We at NASA Education are indebted to many, many people who offered their time, talent and financial assistance to provide this two-day event for the veterans.

Special thanks are due Director Duckworth for attending the Stand Down to bring hope and encouragement to the veterans in such a personal way; to Senator Pamela Althoff who also addressed the veterans on Monday and brought eight pairs of brand new shoes as her personal contribution; and to John Blanchard, our executive director, who served with the U.S. Navy for eight years, for allowing all of us to share in his ambitious dream of a better life for all homeless veterans. Lynda Fauser and her staff at YMCA Camp Algonquin were just awesome in their zeal to do everything in their power to make the veterans feel welcome. We are grateful to the Stardust Radio Network 1690 AM for broadcasting Director Duckworth’s, Senator Althoff’s and John Blanchard’s remarks live.

Many thanks are due also to Krissy Olszewski of Chazio’s Salon in Algonquin, Wendy Webber of SportClips Haircuts in McHenry and Tracy Fafinski of SportClips Haircuts in Rolling Meadows who gave free haircuts on Monday to the veterans at



*Above, volunteer stylist Wendy Webber of SportClips Haircuts gives veteran Ross Hart a haircut. Tracy Fafinski of SportClips and Krissy Olszewski of Chazio’s Salon also participated as volunteer stylists.*

the Stand Down, and Sheryl Roberts of Changing Lifestyles who gave them chair massages while they were waiting for haircuts. They were serenaded by the Soul Mate Singers. Algonquin dentists Dr. Tim Stirneman, Dr. Audrey Stirneman, and Dr. Christina Sehy of All Smiles Dental each provided dental services for a veteran. Dr. Steven Kamps of Algonquin Dental Associates provided dental care for two veterans. Jeff Antonelli, an attorney with the Law Offices of Gene Hanson Ltd. in Chicago, provided legal counseling for some of the veterans as did Jennifer Gelman, an attorney with Prairie State Legal Services and Janet Douglass, a paralegal with Prairie State Legal Services. Susan Giannone, a constituent services specialist with Congresswoman Melissa Bean’s office, and Pat O’Dea-Evans of Paxem, Inc., gave veterans information about community services to which they might be entitled. Lions Foundation provided the hearing van. Robert J. Miller, Algonquin Road District, provided signage and safety vests for the parking lot attendants.

Of course it wouldn’t have been a Stand

Down without the veteran participants themselves, so we thank our nation’s heroes for attending the Stand Down and those volunteers who provided transportation for them – Joe Lewis of VietNow and the McHenry County Veterans Assistance Commission; Amanda Schumacher, who is herself a veteran and served in Iraq; and members of the H.E.L.P.S. ministry in Elgin. We also want to thank the P.A.D.S. location hosts, the libraries, veterans’ organizations, shelters and the veterans themselves who posted flyers for us at the Metra stations and other locations.

Every volunteer at the Stand Down who once had a father, child, sibling or grandchild in the military were there to thank the veterans in a personal way for their service to the nation and their community. Some of them came from as far as Chicago and LaGrange Park just to help serve the meals, pour a veteran a cup of coffee, sort donated clothes, register cars in the parking lot or clean up afterward.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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*(Continued from page 3)*

The volunteers from the community and beyond who took one or two days out of their lives to come through for the veterans were wonderful. At times we had more volunteers than we needed, so these enterprising individuals invented their own jobs. Tanza Kubacki, for example, brought in her sewing machine on Tuesday to shorten hems on donated clothing for veterans; Patty Holton, who drove all the way from LaGrange Park, Illinois to volunteer for the Stand Down, gave the lunch on Monday a high-end dining ambience by appropriating a small cart from the kitchen, loading it with goodies from the sweet table and wheeling it through the tables to ply veterans with carrot cake and pineapple upside down cake.

We thank the veterans' service providers – the team from North Chicago VA Medical Center, Phyllis Taylor Smith and Gail Pike from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, Mike Iwanicki and Cheryl Kirsch of the McHenry County Veterans Assistance Commission; Pete Castillo Jr., the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist through Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)/Department of Labor at Woodstock; Reynaldo Infante, the DVOP Specialist at

Grayslake; Lisa and Ted Biever of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, Richard Lesniewicz of the American Legion, Scott Ottesen of The Vet Center, and our own NASA Education.

Financial assistance was partially provided through a grant from the VETS/U.S. Department of Labor and a grant from HelpAmerica Foundation, and we thank these benefactors for their generosity.

American Legion Post 1231 of Lake in the Hills hosted a Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser in February to benefit NASA Education and the Stand Down. Others who donated cash include VFW Post 6915 and Auxiliary of Carpentersville, Miller Verchota, Inc., National Association of System Administrators (NASA), AT&T, Olson Electrics Corporation of Richmond, Costco Wholesale, Kinko's and individuals from community who saw the need and reached for their wallets and checkbooks.

Volunteers, services and items for the veterans were provided by members of the McHenry County Marine Corps. League, American Post 1231 and Auxiliary, VFW Post 4600, Fox River/McHenry, American Legion Post 491 McHenry; Ba'ruch International Prayer Center, Richmond PM Ser-

vices, Eli Lilly Co., the Knights of Columbus, the McHenry County Mental Health Board/Family Care, the VFW Post 6915 and Auxiliary of Carpentersville, and many other individuals.

We'd like to thank NASA's tireless and enthusiastic officers, staff members, veteran trainees and their families – John Blanchard, Joanne Blanchard, James Blanchard, Dawn Blanchard, Dominique Blanchard, Amy Johnson, Dean Flesor, Eric Beringer, Eric Behler, Andy Brown, Diana May, Stephanie Rojo, Amanda Schumacher, Ted Williams and Bob Chwedyk -- for their camaraderie, hard work and understanding.

We couldn't have done it without any of you.

In addition to producing the semiannual Stand Down, the Crystal Lake-based National Association of Systems Administrators Education Corporation (NASA Education), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, provides vocational rehabilitation for U.S. veterans who are displaced disabled or are otherwise in transition. For more information about NASA Education or the next Stand Down, please call me at 815-455-5190 or send an email to [kathy\\_chwedyk@nasaeducation.org](mailto:kathy_chwedyk@nasaeducation.org).

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## Donate used equipment and cars to NASA Education for the veterans

Do you have old or obsolete equipment gathering dust in your back room or warehouse? Do you live in the Chicago area and have a car you don't need?

If you do, please consider donating your old equipment and/or car to National Association of Systems Administrators Education Corporation (NASA Education).

To make an equipment or automobile donation, please call Kathy Chwedyk at NASA Education at (866) 338-4968, or send an e-mail to [kathy\\_chwedyk@nasaeducation.org](mailto:kathy_chwedyk@nasaeducation.org). The equipment and cars don't have to be in workable condition for them to be of use to NASA Education. Cash donations are also welcome.