

VETERANS, from page 8

to Alison Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits at the U.S. VA.

"Those claims are coming in far more complex than we have experienced in past conflicts, largely for a good news reason," Hickey said. "Our veterans are ... 10 times more likely to survive a major injury or illness and that's a good thing, but that means that we are going to be taking care of many more people for some very serious injuries for a long time."

McNabb, in addition to his PTSD, suffered a traumatic brain injury, which has impaired his memory. Landau said they see many veterans with knee, back, shoulder and neck injuries as a result of the 80 to 100 pounds of equipment they carry on missions – injuries not outwardly apparent as combat related.

Donovan said there is an increased risk of substance abuse in U.S. veterans who suffer debilitating injuries because doctors often prescribe potentially addictive painkillers.

John Alford, 57, turned to the bottle after serving in Northern Ireland. Blinded in one eye by a nail bomb during his service with the First Gloucestershire Regiment, he saw two colleagues shot by snipers.

"You can never forget something like that," he said. "After I left the army, I found it difficult to fit in and settle anywhere, and drink becomes something you suppress it all with. I lost a lot through it. I've been married four times." Alford is sober now and is establishing a new life, assisted by the Forces Self Build Scheme in Bristol, a program that is helping ex-service personnel build their own housing.

Such grassroots initiatives, national veterans' charities and government agencies have launched scores of programs in recent years to help military personnel with everything from housing to job training and advice. Many also connect veterans with veterans to give them a new sense of community and common experience.

Angell says many of the staff at the VA's 300 centers across the United States are former combat veterans like McNabb who understand the trauma of life under fire.

Bryan Green, 64, a former staff sergeant in the UK's Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers, found it hard to adapt to civilian life after a quarter century in the military and suffered a breakdown three years ago. He finds the sense of belonging at Norcare's veterans' center invaluable.

"It takes a long time to re-adjust. Bills and everything else have been done for you, so you don't have a clue. And you're not part of a team. Suddenly the army is

gone. A door has been shut in your life," Green said. "When I can talk about these things with these guys, people who have been through the same things, it means a lot. ... Bills and everything else have been done for you, so you don't have a clue. And you're not part of a team. Suddenly the army is gone"

Phil Quesnelle, recently released from the Canadian Forces on disability after receiving a diagnosis of PTSD, sits on the board of the South Mid Vancouver Island Zone Veterans Housing Society, which founded a transitional residence devoted to ex-service personnel struggling to find shelter.

He also acts as a peer counselor, offering others the benefit of his experience.

"It's not a switch you can turn on or off," Quesnelle said. "But people expect you to go back to normal over the span of that 10-hour flight back to Canada. It doesn't work that way and people just don't understand it."

Conscious of the disproportionate numbers of ex-service personnel in the ranks of U.S. unemployed, the VA has hired 400 formerly homeless veterans to act as peer counselors for those trying to find work. They coach on resumes, talk through interviews and are at the end of a telephone to give support through the sometimes stressful early days on a new job.

It has also set up a new human resources office that helps job-seekers translate their work in the military into civilian job skills along with guidance on applications.

"We're being very proactive because honestly since poverty is the definer of the pathway to homelessness, if at least we can drop that unemployment rate for our newest veterans coming back, that should be a big prevention strategy," said the VA's Angell.

The VA also negotiates with lenders to help veterans who can't afford rent, and says its efforts kept 9 percent more veterans in their homes last year compared to prior years.

"It can be quite expensive to try to get someone who has been chronically homeless for many years off the street and stabilized, compared to what it might take to prevent it," Angell said. "You can help someone with two months' rent, compared to what it would cost in 10 years to help this person get off the street and deal with other health issues."

Hugh Milroy, who served in the first Gulf War and is now CEO of UK charity Veterans Aid, believes veterans are actually "citizens-plus" in Britain, with the government as well as 3,000 charities offering support. He worries that too much focus on the homelessness issue may brand veterans as victims.

He agrees the situation is tougher in the United States, in part because of the

absence of universal health care and a strong social safety net.

Denmark's support for its returnees is not as pronounced as in some other countries, according to street newspaper

**"Those claims are coming in far more complex than we have experienced in past conflicts, largely for a good news reason. Our veterans are ... 10 times more likely to survive a major injury or illness and that's a good thing, but that means that we are going to be taking care of many more people for some very serious injuries for a long time."**

— ALISON HICKEY  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS AT THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hus Forbi. The Ministry of Defence there puts returning soldiers through a three-month acclimatization program. Six months after their return, they are asked to fill out a questionnaire. One-third of veterans never reply.

Donovan of the National Coalition for the Homeless in the United States says the increases in funding under the Obama administration will inevitably reduce the number of veterans on the streets, but he worries Congress may turn its attention elsewhere once the United States has withdrawn from Iraq.

"We're a country suffering from ADD, and when we aren't at war we're going to stop thinking about veterans and we're going to think about something else," Donovan said.

The key, he said, is ensuring that enough permanent housing is built via programs like the VA's Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program, where veterans get vouchers for housing organized by local housing authorities in the United States.

"It reminds me of antibiotics," Donovan said. "If you give somebody two doses the first day and another dose and another dose and all of a sudden they start feeling better and you don't give them the last three days, what happens? The person's going to get sick again and when it comes back, it's going to be medically resistant, it's going to be treatment-resistant. That's what happens with these populations. You don't solve the problem. You pour tons of money into it, you pay attention to it, but you don't solve the problem and it becomes socially resistant."

Additional reporting by Joanne Zuhl/Street Roots, Portland; Yvonne Robertson/Megaphone Canada; Adam Forrest/The Big Issue UK; Simon Ankjærgaard/Hus Forbi and Danielle Batist/Street News Service.

Humana Tea

by Aaron Randazzo

This seemingly dual being, humanity  
Distracted with thought, placated with  
vanity  
Murmurs in the wind may help us to see  
Mankind is drinking from a bad cup of tea  
A journey to nowhere can seem so long  
Simply ignore the "right" and "wrong"  
The human spirit, so lost and oblong  
Need only listen to a dove's gentle song:

"See the still tree ... be still  
Feel the kind Earth ... be kind  
Know the silent spider ... be silent  
Love being ... be loved"

Rain upon reign with chants  
Meanings we soulfully incant  
Spare the intellectual rants  
Connect spiritually like the ants  
Question authority for its deceitful glamour  
Dampened by thought, driven by clamor  
Build trust in the Mother of all things  
Who shakes the Earth, dances and sings:  
'Welcome home!'

SISTERS IS PROUD TO ONCE AGAIN HOST OUR  
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY MARCH



Jerahim Mubarak,  
Genevieve Nelson  
Award recipient, will be  
honored at peaceroots  
during MLK weekend

as part of a full  
weekend of activities

January 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>

VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
FOR ALL THE DETAILS!

www.sistersoftheroad.org

SISTERS  
OF THE  
ROAD

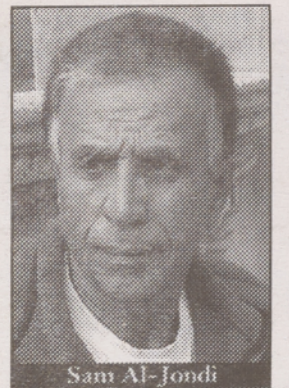


133 NW 6th Ave.  
Portland, Oregon  
97209  
503-222-5694

CODE OF  
CONDUCT



Check out Street  
Roots Vendor  
Sam Al-Jondi's  
new book, "Code  
of Conduct."  
Al-Jondi writes  
about his  
experiences and offers a fresh  
perspective about the world we  
live in.



The books can be purchased at the  
Multnomah County Central Library  
on SW 10th Ave., on Kindle,  
Amazon, and for \$10 through  
Street Roots at 211 NW Davis St.,  
Portland, OR 97209.