

Centers for International Studies at eight prestigious universities worldwide. These Rotary Centers offer graduate degrees in peace and conflict studies to a group of 70 Rotary World Peace Scholars chosen annually in a worldwide competitive selection process.

As well as supporting higher education, Rotary is fighting illiteracy worldwide. Of particular note is Rotary's literacy program in Thailand. Lighthouses for Literacy, has proven so successful that the Thai government has adopted Rotary's method fighting mass illiteracy.

Mr. Speaker, Rotary has grown exponentially from the humble beginnings of 4 men working to foster fellowship and community service, to a multinational organization of 1.2 million men and women who belong to more than 29,600 clubs worldwide. At home and abroad, Rotary International members are bringing positive change to their communities; I applaud their many efforts to strengthen our social fabric.

I would like to extend special congratulations to the clubs in Rotary District 5150, which encompasses much of the Bay Area. Many of these clubs are located in my Congressional District. I have had the pleasure to meet with many members of District 5150 and count Rotarians as my friends. It is a great honor for me today to recognize their many services of goodwill to their communities and celebrate this important milestone. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Rotary International on their centennial anniversary.

CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS (CHD)

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 14, 2005

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because February brings to mind a time of year dedicated to hearts in the form of chocolates, cards, candies and sweet mementoes. Very little attention, however, is given to the health and the condition of the actual heart these candies and mementoes symbolize: the human heart of a loved one. It is imperative that we pause during this season to recognize the importance of cardiac health in our children, families, and loved ones.

There are nearly one million adults and children living with Congenital Heart Defects (CHD) in the United States alone, and his number continues to rise as nearly 40,000 children are diagnosed each year. Despite these figures, very little recognition is given to the victims and families of those suffering from CHD. Many of the children born with CHD are not diagnosed until days or even months after birth. This lack of detection endangers those who live without knowledge of their illness.

Among the many infants affected, the symptoms drastically range in severity and medical costs. Some children are barely affected by their defect, requiring nothing more than occasional monitoring. However, there are also families placed under the heavy emotional and financial burden of a severe heart defect that requires lifelong medical attention. The cost of multiple open heart surgeries, drugs, and raised insurance premiums becomes a special problem for low income families. Numerous or-

ganizations provide these families with support and financial aid to protect their loved ones, but these groups are only able to help a small percentage of people due to the lack of national recognition of CHD.

Raising a national consciousness about the defects and their effects will provide hope and comfort for those who have struggled with heart defects. Jeanne Imperati, the loving mother of a child with a heart defect, had the foresight in 1999 to begin a campaign focused on spreading awareness through a Congenital Heart Defects Awareness Day on February 14. On a day already dedicated to hearts, it is a simple and meaningful endeavor to remind the nation of this worthwhile cause. More attention can be given to the regularity of the defects and research about their possible cause. Creating a network of informed people throughout the nation is a simple way to provide support for survivors and their families.

While we go about the tradition of honoring loved ones this Valentine's Day, let's also give our support to those affected by Congenital Heart Defects and their cause. Awareness is the first step toward saving lives and protecting those whom we love.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 14, 2005

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, February 10, 2005, I was unavoidably detained due to a prior obligation.

I request that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD reflect that had I been present and voting, I would have voted as follows:

(1) Rollcall No. 31: "No" (Final Passage of H.R. 418); (2) Rollcall No. 30: "Yes" (Motion to Recommit H.R. 418); (3) Rollcall No. 29: "Yes" (Farr amendment to H.R. 418) (4) Rollcall No. 28: "Yes" (Nadler amendment to H.R. 418).

LEGISLATION IN SUPPORT OF DESIGNATION AND GOALS OF HIRE-A-VETERAN WEEK

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 14, 2005

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation honors and supports the ongoing efforts of our troops in Iraq and prays for the safety of all of our uniformed men and women still in the Gulf, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, now is also an opportune time for Congress to do more to help our Nation's new and old veterans in need. To this end, I am joined by my distinguished colleague, U.S. Representative HENRY BROWN, in introducing bipartisan legislation to urge the establishment of a "National Hire-A-Veteran Week." Our legislation also urges a presidential proclamation calling upon employers, labor organizations, veterans' service organizations, and Federal, State, and local governmental agencies to employ more veterans.

In spite of the best efforts of the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans

Affairs, imposing barriers continue to impede many deserving veterans from securing employment and achieving self-sufficiency. Just this week, I read a disturbing article by Alexandra Marks that appeared in the Christian Science Monitor and is entitled "Back From Iraq—And Suddenly Out On The Streets." It should alert all of us to the grim reality that veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts are now showing up in our Nation's homeless shelters. I submit this article for entry into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD at the conclusion of my statement.

Sadly, many veterans struggle to find jobs, even with some opportunities for increased training and education offered through government programs. Little more than half of our Nation's veterans are employed today. According to the 2000 census, for example, nearly 20 percent of Gulf War veterans are unemployed.

Moreover, it is troubling and shameful that so many of our veterans who risked their own lives in support of our country can't find jobs and must endure homelessness and lives of poverty after they return home. Indeed, American veterans comprise one-third of the homeless male population in America; while an estimated 250,000 veterans live on our city streets. In fact, the number of homeless Vietnam War veterans today exceeds the number of service persons who died during that war.

Mr. Speaker, even as we tend to the well-being of our men and women currently on active duty, we cannot forget those who have already served their country and deserve more assistance in moving to the next phase of their civilian lives. A presidential proclamation of "National Hire-A-Veteran Week" would provide an effective and more focused way to do more to help all of our veterans find good jobs and ensure better living standards for themselves and their families. I hope that all of my colleagues will support this legislation and will take one more step to help repay the debt we owe to all of our Nation's defenders. I also hope it can be promptly enacted and signed into law during this session of Congress.

[From the Christian Science Monitor, Feb. 8, 2005]

BACK FROM IRAQ—AND SUDDENLY OUT ON THE STREETS

(By Alexandra Marks)

NEW YORK.—Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts are now showing up in the nation's homeless shelters.

While the numbers are still small, they're steadily rising, and raising alarms in both the homeless and veterans' communities. The concern is that these returning veterans—some of whom can't find jobs after leaving the military, others of whom are still struggling psychologically with the war—may be just the beginning of an influx of new veterans in need. Currently, there are 150,000 troops in Iraq and 16,000 in Afghanistan. More than 130,000 have already served and returned home.

So far, dozens of them, like Herold Noel, a married father of three, have found themselves sleeping on the streets, on friends' couches, or in their cars within weeks of returning home. Two years ago, Black Veterans for Social Justice (BVSJ) in the borough of Brooklyn, saw only a handful of recent returnees. Now the group is aiding more than 100 Iraq veterans, 30 of whom are homeless.

"It's horrible to put your life on the line and then come back home to nothing, that's what I came home to: nothing. I didn't know where to go or where to turn," says Mr. Noel.

"I thought I was alone, but I found out there are a whole lot of other soldiers in the same situation. Now I want people to know what's really going on."

After the Vietnam War, tens of thousands of veterans came home to a hostile culture that offered little gratitude and inadequate services, particularly to deal with the stresses of war. As a result, tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans still struggle with homelessness and drug addiction.

Veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are coming home to a very different America. While the Iraq war remains controversial, there is almost unanimous support for the soldiers overseas. And in the years since Vietnam, more than 250 non-profit veterans' service organizations have sprouted up, many of them created by people like Peter Cameron, a Vietnam veteran who is determined that what happened to his fellow soldiers will not happen again.

But he and dozens of other veterans' service providers are concerned by the increasing numbers of new veterans ending up on streets and in shelters.

Part of the reason for these new veterans' struggles is that housing costs have skyrocketed at the same time real wages have remained relatively stable, often putting rental prices out of reach. And for many, there is a gap of months, sometimes years, between when military benefits end and veterans benefits begin.

"We are very much committed to helping veterans coming back from this war," says Mr. Cameron, executive director of Vietnam Veterans of California. "But the [Department of Veterans Affairs] already has needs it can't meet and there's a lot of fear out there that programs are going to be cut even further."

BEYOND THE YELLOW RIBBONS

Both the Veterans Administration and private veterans service organizations are already stretched, providing services for veterans of previous conflicts. For instance, while an estimated 500,000 veterans were

homeless at some time during 2004, the VA had the resources to tend to only 100,000 of them.

"You can have all of the yellow ribbons on cars that say 'Support Our Troops' that you want, but it's when they take off the uniform and transition back to civilian life that they need support the most," says Linda Boone, executive director of The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

After the Vietnam conflict, it was nine to 12 years before veterans began showing up at homeless shelters in large numbers. In part, that's because the trauma they experienced during combat took time to surface, according to one Vietnam veteran who's now a service provider. Doctors refer to the phenomenon as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

A recent study published by the New England Journal of Medicine found that 15 to 17 percent of Iraq vets meet "the screening criteria for major depression, generalized anxiety, or PTSD." Of those, only 23 to 40 percent are seeking help—in part because so many others fear the stigma of having a mental disorder.

Many veterans' service providers say they're surprised to see so many Iraq veterans needing help so soon.

"This kind of inner city, urban guerrilla warfare that these veterans are facing probably accelerates mental-health problems," says Yogin Ricardo Singh, director of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program at BVSJ. "And then there's the soldier's mentality: Asking for help is like saying, 'I've failed a mission.' It's very hard for them to do."

Beyond PTSD and high housing costs, many veterans also face an income void, as they search for new jobs or wait for their veterans benefits to kick in.

When Mr. Noel was discharged in December of 2003, he and his family had been living in base housing in Georgia. Since they were no longer eligible to live there, they began the search for a new home. But Noel had trouble

landing a job and the family moved to New York, hoping for help from a family member. Eventually, they split up: Noel's wife and infant child moved in with his sister-in-law, and his twins were sent to relatives in Florida. Noel slept in his car, on the streets, and on friend's couches.

Last spring he was diagnosed with PTSD, and though he's currently in treatment, his disability claim is still being processed. Unable to keep a job so far, he's had no steady income, although an anonymous donor provided money for him to take an apartment last week. He expects his family to join him soon.

'NOBODY UNDERSTOOD . . . THE WAY I WAS'

Nicole Goodwin is another vet diagnosed with PTSD who has yet to receive disability benefits. Unable to stay with her mother, she soon found herself walking the streets of New York, with a backpack full of her belongings and her 1-year-old daughter held close.

"When I first got back I just wanted to jump into a job and forget about Iraq, but the culture shock from the military to the civilian world hit me," she says. "I was depressed for months. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. The worst thing wasn't the war, it was coming back, because nobody understood why I was the way I was."

Ms. Goodwin was determined not to sleep on the streets, and so eventually went into the New York City shelter system where, after being shuffled from shelter to shelter, she was told she was ineligible for help. But media attention changed that, and she was able to obtain a rent voucher. With others' generosity, she also found a job. She's now attending college and working with other veterans who are determined to go to Washington with their stories.

"When soldiers get back, they should still be considered military until they can get on their feet," she says. "It's a month-to-month process, trying to actually function again. It's not easy, it takes time."