

## MINUTES

### UNITED TENNESSEE VETERANS ASSOCIATION (UTVA)

Legislative Plaza, Room 31 Nashville, Tennessee **Wednesday, September 9, 2015**

#### UTVA Information Available at

<https://www.tn.gov/veteran/topic/united-tennessee-veterans-association-utva>

<b>Speakers</b>	
Dr. C. Diane Knight	Director, VAMC Memphis
Shelly Mullins	Representing Director Edna MacDonald, VARO Nashville
John Krenson	Executive Director, Operation Stand Down Tennessee
Daryl Macklin	Executive Director, A Soldier's Child Foundation

<b>UTVA Members Present</b>	
Fred M. Poe	Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
Kent Crossley	Middle TN Chapter - MOAA
Ron Bottomley	AMVETS Post 1776
Vicki Stinnett	MWAN
Mary Lee Fielder	American Ex- Prisoners of War
James Patterson	American Legion
John Furgess	VFW
Tim Coop	WWP
Barry Rice	VVA
Frank Forbes	DAV

<b>TDVS Executive Members Present</b>	
Many-Bears Grinder	Commissioner
Mark Breece	Deputy Commissioner, TDVS
Yvette Martinez	Assistant Commissioner, Outreach & Communications
Lorenza Wills	Assistant Commissioner, TDVS
David Jungquist	Assistant Commissioner, TDVS
Travis Murphy	Assistant Commissioner, TDVS
John Drnek	Assistant Commissioner, TDVS

## **I. Call To Order**

At 1:00 p.m., Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder took roll call and confirmed that a quorum was present. Commissioner Grinder called the meeting to order with a welcome to all attendees.

## **II. Invocation**

Lorenza Wills, Assistant Commissioner, TDVS, led the invocation.

## **III. Pledge of Allegiance**

John Drnek, Assistant Commissioner, TDVS, lead the pledge.

## **IV. Presentation of Agenda**

Commissioner Grinder reviewed the meeting agenda in opening.

## **V. Approval of Minutes**

There was a motion to accept the minutes from the June, 2015 UTVA meeting. Minutes were approved.

## **VI. Briefings:**

**Commissioner Grinder** introduced Shelly Mullins representing Director MacDonald, Director VARO Nashville. Ms. Mullins addressed the participants highlighting national accomplishments regarding claims and reduction in backlog numbers as well as accuracy with existing claims. Decrease in wait times for claims nationwide was noted. Vocational rehabilitation and employment issues were briefly addressed. Specific statistics for the Nashville Regional office were provided. All specific statistics regarding regional and nation claims are available in the presentation provided by the VARO. My VA improvement areas and upcoming events for the department were highlighted in closing.

John Furgess, VFW, applauded the numbers presented by Ms. Mullins.

### **Commissioner Grinder turned the floor over to Dr. Diane Knight, Director VAMC, Memphis**

Dr. Knight opened by expressing the importance of the UTVA meeting and the function of the forum as a direct line of communication. Dr. Knight briefed regarding construction within the Memphis facility and the specific

enhancements to increase access. Excessive wait times were specifically addressed as well as admissions and observation criteria. Special services and programs available were briefly addressed. Initiatives were given emphasis including Veterans Choice Care program and partnerships with community providers; noting that 83% of care provided is on an outpatient basis. Dr. Knight specifically addressed traffic and parking concerns outlining steps that the facility has taken to alleviate the issues. Construction on multiple projects continues to be a problem and the facility is taking a proactive approach regarding accommodations for Veterans during this process. Dr. Knight closed by highlighting multiple areas including VA Voices customer service training, town hall meetings, advancements in surgical theaters, and employee recognition by the private sector. John Furgess addressed Dr. Knight to confirm that VAMC Memphis is still a spinal cord facility. Dr. Knight affirmed that statement.

Commissioner Grinder thanked Dr. Knight for her time, participation, and leadership. Commissioner Grinder excused herself to meet with Dr. Knight in a sidebar.

### **The floor was turned over to John Krenson, Executive Director, Operation Stand Down.**

Director Krenson introduced himself clarifying his role as the new Executive Director for OSD. Director Krenson announced work on video production by the organization and presented the video. Specific services provided were highlighted as well as the fact that OSD is the only Veterans Service Center in the state recognized by the VA. Changes with the Veteran population were discussed noting specific demographics. Challenges ahead regarding female Veteran needs and increasing population were discussed including steps that OSD are taking to address the concerns. Relevant services provided by OSD were outlined including job placement and transitional housing. Accessibility and marketing issues with the facility were addressed and it was noted that the organization is working with architects to rebrand their facility to provide a more welcoming façade. Statistics regarding OSD are available for review in the presented presentation.

Commissioner Grinder thanked Director Krenson for his participation.

### **The floor was turned over to Daryl Macklin, Founder and Executive Director, A Soldiers Child.**

Director Macklin briefed the participants on the formation of the organization and their mission statement. A main point of service is birthday celebrations for children connected to any active duty service member death; celebrating on average 175 children per month. Children involved in the program are provided with the opportunity to participate in a mentorship program as well as qualifying for college funds. A video was presented regarding the program. In closing a gift of organizational shirts was offered to those present and Director Macklin thanked UTVA for the opportunity to participate and educate regarding A Soldiers Child.

Commissioner Grinder thanked Mr. Macklin for his participation.

Commissioner Grinder addressed participants noting when membership applications are due regarding UTVA. There was a motion to approve pending submissions, which was passed. UTVA participants were reminded of the TDVS department name change as well as the new website. Attendees were directed to pre-registration for burial, the Next Chapter, Veteran jobs, education, and business resources. Claims processing and issues were specifically addressed noting an increase in claims filed.

Commissioner Grinder noted broader issues regarding assistance needed by Veterans and the gaps with the educational system as well as how we can strive to serve Veterans of all eras. The reorganization of The Tennessee Department of Veterans Services was communicated to participants and how the new roles within the department fit into the overall mission. The current executive team was introduced and their roles briefly defined. The departure of Assistant Commissioner David Jungquist was discussed as well as his many contributions. The positions for Education Resource Coordinators were announced and their roles defined. It was noted that all changes within the department would take place under the current budget.



John Furgess commented praising Commissioner Grinder for the progress that the department has made, expressing approval for the current leadership structure.

Assistant Commissioner Yvette Martinez communicated that TDVS was the only department that had not undergone budget cuts. Commissioner Grinder made note of POW/MIA week to take place the end of September.

Following Commissioner Grinder's briefing, fiscal year numbers were presented by Deputy Commissioner Mark Breece.

**VII. Unfinished Business:**

Submission of online forms was addressed as an issue by Frank Forbes of DAV. Online signatures were an obstacle for the submission of the documents. There was a request for an approval of physical copies in lieu of the online signature. Request was held over for a vote at the next meeting.

**VIII. New Business:**

There was no new business to discuss.

**IX. Future Meetings: 1 pm Tuesday, December 1, 2015**

**X. Announcements:**

VFW Ladies Auxiliary has discontinued with the use of the term "Ladies" in an effort to open the membership to non female members.

**XI. Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Grinder at approximately 3pm.

United Tennessee Veteran Association  
Sign-in Sheet  
Wednesday, September 9, 2015

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>E-mail</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
1) Fred m Poe	AFSA		615-641-6249
2) Kent Crossley	middy TN Chapter - KNOX	Kent.CROSSLEY@ Campan.Mil	757 620 9624
3) Ron Bottonley	AMVETS POST 1776	rbottonley@ootlook.com	615-642-8892
Vicki 4) SINNETT	MWAN	VMSWNETT@ ADL.COM	301/502-2639
5) Mary Lee Fielder	Amer. POWs	marylee@bellouthernet	615-889-5689
6) James PATTERSON	AMERICAN Legion	jpatrick@maurycounty -tn.gov	931-215-8254
7) John FURGESS	VFW	N/A	615-812-1507
8) Tim Coop	WWA	+coop@woundedwarriorproject.	904-451-0905
9) Barry Rice	THE STATE COUNCIL UVA	barryrice.tsc@uzil.com	615-479-8619
10) Lorenza Wills	TUVS	Lorenza.Wills@TN.GOV	615-828-5014

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>E-mail</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
11) MARK Breece	TN Dept of Vet SVC	mark.breece@tn.gov	615-741-6603
12) MBGrinder	" "		
13) DAVID JUNGQUIST	" "	DAVID.JUNGQUIST@TN.GOV	615-695-6329
14) John Drnek	" "	John.DRNEK@TN.GOV	731-423-5615
15) Travis Murphy	" "		615-695-6329
16) FRANK FORBES	DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS	Sforbes1@bellsouth.net	615-834-4077
17)			
18)			
19)			
20)			