

American Veterans
United, Inc.
P.O Box 249
Moorpark, CA 93020
Fein: 46-1323725

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VETNEWS
A Publication of
American Veterans United Inc.



American Veterans United, Inc.

Central Coast, Moorpark, Orange County
"A California Non-Profit Corporation" FEIN: 461323725
"God Bless You and the United States of America"

Our Organization

No matter where in California and throughout America our organization of veterans, active duty members and their families live, we strive to serve and support them. "So, please join us!" As you elect to join us, we look forward to any suggestions you may have for improving the effectiveness of this organization.

You will realize the sense of pride that is justifiably yours for the significant contribution you have provided to the defense of our country.

THESE ARE YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS & TEAM MEMBERS.

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Tommy Lara – Director Area 1	
Loren Manes - Director Area 1	
Martin Lopez - Coordinator Area 1	
	(Updated 3/25/2022)

MEETINGS:

Area 2 on the 3rd Saturday of every month
Moorpark General Meeting
11AM—12 PM
Tierra Rejada Golf Club
15187 Tierra Rejada Rd, Moorpark, CA 93021

Board of Directors:
(Please see monthly AVU Calendar for dates, times and locations).

Area 1 on the 4th Saturday of every month
Central Coast General Meeting
11 AM– 12 PM
American Legion Post 534
134 W. Clark Ave. Orcutt, CA 93455

Area 3
Orange County General Meeting on the 2nd Saturday of every month
11 AM—12 PM
American Legion Post 132
143 S. Lemon, Orange, CA 92866

Meetings dates are subject to change.
Please check monthly calendars.

**Please visit our website or
Facebook page to see
more of our event photos
and what's happening!
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Veterans help veterans with nonprofit



American Veterans United President Henry Alfaro, left, Vice President Frank Renteria (Area 2) and Assistant Secretary Erlinda Alfaro lead the Moorpark-based nonprofit.

March 12, 2022
By Makena Huey
makena@thacorn.com

Henry Alfaro spent two years fighting for his country during the Vietnam War.

When he sought assistance from Veterans Affairs nearly 20 years ago, he never anticipated having to spend eight months fighting to receive his benefits.

It wasn't long before other veterans who didn't know they were entitled to benefits, let alone know how to access them, began approaching Alfaro, 74, for help, leading to the creation of American Veterans United.

Since 2014, the Moorpark-based nonprofit has helped more than 14,000 veterans receive the help they need.

"Nobody was there for us when we got home, so we're there for them," said Alfaro, AVU's president.

Alfaro was drafted in 1967 at the age of 19. He was newly married and had to leave behind his wife, Erlinda, who was pregnant with their first child. She received only \$120 each month and had to move back in with her parents.

When he returned from Vietnam, she saw he was showing signs of what they later realized was post-traumatic stress disorder and the affect on his health caused by Agent Orange.

"Before he left, I knew where his heart was, and I knew that wasn't him when he came back. He was a different man, and it was very, very hard," Erlinda Alfaro said. "There were a lot of things we couldn't discuss because people didn't understand PTSD."

While serving in Vietnam, Alfaro and the other men in his unit helped wounded civilians in a bombarded village receive medical assistance, which he said was the root of his PTSD. Erlinda Alfaro and their two sons learned of his experience years later when he received a letter of appreciation.

Once AVU was formed, she became the assistant secretary and dedicated herself to helping the spouses of veterans.

Alfaro said it is still difficult for him and the veterans he helps to open up about what they saw during the war. "A lot of them will tell me some of the incidents that happened to them over there, but they won't tell anybody else," he said.

"It's hard for a lot of people to talk about the worst part of their lives." We never stopped helping," he said.

The recent return of in-person AVU meetings has meant the return of a safe space for veterans to gather. Together, they develop relationships and coping skills.

During the meetings, Renteria reads the names of veteran members who have died, some due to COVID-19, and they ring a bell and play taps to honor them.

It is an important yet difficult tradition for the spouses left behind and for Alfaro, who knew and helped each and every member.

"it means a lot to their families," he said tearfully after watching a video of one of the ceremonies.

Veterans or their surviving spouses often call AVU in tears, not because they feel lost or alone like they did before but because they finally received the benefits they deserve.

"It changes lives," Renteria said of the nonprofit.

Moorpark resident Colleen Graven is one of AVU's 900 members. The organization is helping her 89-year-old uncle apply for benefits—benefits he should have been earning since the day he left Korea seven decades ago.

"That (veterans) have to seek out these benefits and were not told about them is extremely upsetting," she said. She and her uncle are indescribably grateful to the Alfaro, who dedicate their time and energy to those who sacrificed so much for their country.

"The only compensation they receive is the pure satisfaction that they have helped veterans in need," Graven said.

Alfaro, however, said he receives just as much as he gives. By supporting other veterans, he has gained purpose and healing. "Everything is from our hearts," he said. "It's therapy for me."

For more about American Veterans United, call (805) 529-1313 or go to avuinc.org.

Article courtesy of the Acorn News Moorpark, photo by Richard Gillard.

***We encourage you to send us your bios, stories, newsy articles.
(Subject to space and approval)***

US DEPT. VETERANS AFFAIRS



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If you want more information please visit their website: <http://www.va.gov>



Register with CalVet to get veteran benefit and service recommendations just for you! www.cdva.ca.gov

Veteran Services / Benefits

California is home to 1.8 million veterans, representing eight percent of the total U.S. veteran population. California anticipates receiving an additional 30,000 discharged members of the armed services each year for the next several years – more than any other state. Historically, the largest demand for benefits and services for veterans occurs immediately after discharge and again as the veteran population ages and requires greater access to medical facilities and long-term care services.

With the substantial number of veterans under the age of 30 leaving the military after deployments to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with a considerably large population of Vietnam veterans who are now approaching a period in their lives where they will need greater access to medical and long-term care, California is preparing for a sustained spike in earned services and benefits.

About VBA

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) provides a variety of benefits and services to Service members, Veterans, and their families. VBA has been undergoing a major transformation that is people-centric, results-oriented, and a forward-looking integration of solutions that will ensure total lifelong engagement with Service members, Veterans, and their families. To learn more please go to <http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/media-publications.asp>