

LGBTSA Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 4

June 18, 2013

Special points of interest:

- VAPAHCS Pride 2013 Observance
- National LGBT SEP Poster Features VAPAHCS Staff!
- Film featuring VAPAHCS LGBT Veterans

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VAPAHCS Observes LGBT Pride 2013!

VAPAHCS joins hundreds of VAs from across the country in observing LGBT Pride Month through a variety of events in the community and on VA campuses. Staff and veterans are marching for the second year in the [San Francisco Pride Parade](#) and hosting an outreach booth at the [San Jose Pride Event](#).

In addition, VAPAHCS veterans and staff have produced a groundbreaking documentary film entitled "[The Camouflage Closet](#)," which highlights LGBT Veterans' experiences with trauma and recovery. This film is premiering in the community and at VAPAHCS as well as a variety of VA's nationwide and professional conferences such as the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association. Additionally, VAPAHCS continues to host local programs for Veterans and Staff which can be found at the [VAPAHCS LGBT Program Webpage](#) including an LGBT Veteran Support Group, LGBT Staff and Allies Special Empha-

sis Program and links to a variety of community resources for LGBT Veterans.

On a national level, VAPAHCS participates in the national LGBT Research Workgroup and the [LGBT Employee Resource Workgroup](#). The LGBT Research Workgroup is a group of VA researchers from throughout the country who meet monthly to share LGBT Veteran-related research. The Employee Resource Group recently published an LGBT SEP flyer that will be used in VA's across the nation and features three VAPAHCS staff (see page 2 of this newsletter)!

VAPAHCS Staff are encouraged to check out the work of the new Office of Health Equity that spearheaded the Health Equality Index and [LGBT Inclusion Initiatives](#). Another great resource for VA staff is the [Transgender Education Resources SharePoint](#).

VAPAHCS' 2013 LGBT Pride Month observance also includes ongoing commitment to a variety of LGBT-related policies regarding Veterans and Staff:



1. [VHA Directive 2013-003: Providing Health Care for Transgender and Intersex Veterans](#)
2. [Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement](#)
3. [Rights and Responsibilities of VA Patients and Residents of Community Living Centers](#).

To participate in the San Francisco and San Jose Pride Events, please contact Heliana at (650) 444-8586 for VAPAHCS meet-up locations and schedules.



Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Special Emphasis Program

The goal of the VA LGBT Special Emphasis Program is to increase awareness of the important role LGBT employees and Veterans play in making up our rich diversity, to address employee concerns and to ensure the VA has an inclusive work environment. The SEP has taken the lead on coordinating two VACO pride observances and answered hundreds of employee inquiries. We continue to work to promote LGBT employee inclusiveness. The LGBT SEP is made up of a diverse group of VA employees from throughout the country. To find out more, visit us at:

www.diversity.va.gov/programs/lgbt.aspx
or contact us at LGBTworkgroup@va.gov.

To learn about the VAPAHCS LGBT Staff and Allies SEP, visit us at: <http://www.paloalto.va.gov/lgbt.asp>.



The Camouflage Closet: Documentary Film Features VAPAHCS LGBT Veterans!

On June 4th, 9 VAPAHCS LGBT Veterans trekked up to San Francisco for a sold-out premiere of their film "[The Camouflage Closet](#)" at the 16th Annual National Queer Arts Festival. This groundbreaking documentary is especially noteworthy given the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy which previously rendered LGB military all but invisible with stories unknown, because until recently, no one could ask and no one could tell about military experiences of sexual minority service members.*

Directed by Stanford Medical Student Michael Nedelman and produced by VAPAHCS social worker and UC Berkeley PhD student Heliana Ramirez, LISW, the film was accented with an original score composed by UC Berkeley Music Student Andrew Ly. Throughout the film, musicians played the original score to various parts of the documentary on string instruments.

The film itself was created by LGBT Veterans trained in the use of video cameras who shared at weekly project meetings, their own footage describing personal experiences with trauma and recovery. The film also included

LGBT Military Honored Online by OUTServe/SLDN

The LGBT military advocacy agency OUTServe/Service Members Legal Defense Network are hosting a series of FaceBook posts to honor various LGBT military throughout the month of June in celebration of Pride. Check out the list of the people and organizations "making a difference in the fight for full LGBT military equality" on their [website](#).

This is a great way to educate yourself about LGBT military advocacy and

individual interviews with veterans conducted by the director and producer.

Receiving two standing ovations, the film stars, director and producer fielded questions from the audience and hosted a celebration with cake and other refreshments following the screening.

Here are some of the audience's reactions to the film:

"Truly excellent. Thank you! While the film was centered on LGBT vets, I also saw a deeply moving piece on what it means to be a product of the military experience, to be a veteran, and what it means to be human. Pain, love, catharsis, acceptance. A beautiful sequence of stories."

"Incredibly brave—thank you for sharing, opening up, and trusting."

"Provides a thoughtful, well-rounded picture of life before, during, and after the military, with diverse perspectives."

leadership for your own information. If you are a clinician working with LGBT Veterans, this list is also a marvelous resource to use for strengths-based and culturally competent clinical practice.

"Would like to see this shown at every VA! Should be at Frameline International Festival and on Netflix! Liked the live music a lot!"

"I am in awe of all of the people who worked on the film. I hope that you get to continue bringing it to all the audiences you are trying to reach."

"The film was truly amazing. It was moving, inspirational, and most importantly, tells stories that people need to hear in order to start effecting some change. Also, the music accompaniment was perfect. What a great evening."

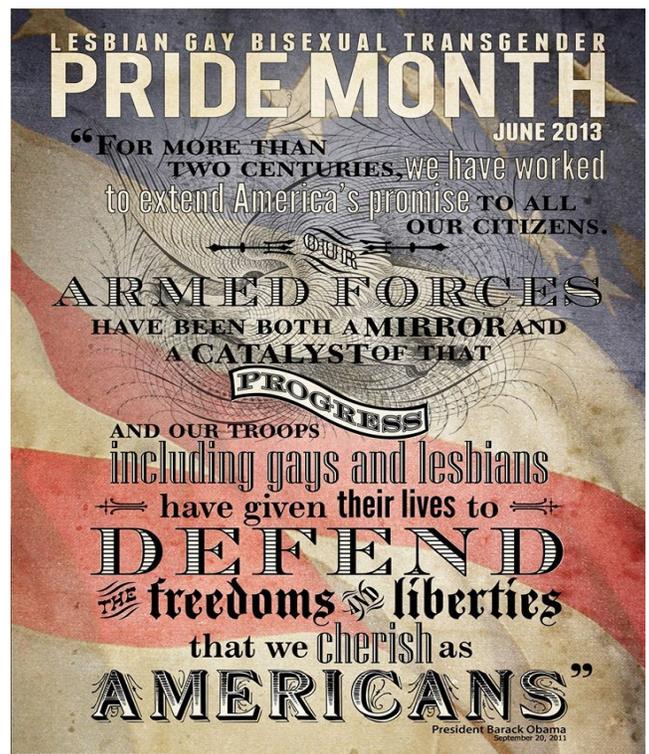
"It was an honor to hear your stories. Thank you for doing this. I know it will help and inspire many people."

To request a screening in your department, email Heliana.Ramirez@va.gov.



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**Transgender people are still prohibited from serving openly in the U.S. military in spite of the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell.*



LGBTSA Newsletter

Next LGBTSA Meeting is
scheduled for

Thursday, July 11th

Noon-1pm

VANTS 1800 767-1750

Access Code 86067

PAD and MPD locations

TBD

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Please send Heliana ideas of stories to be featured in the next issue of the LGBTSA Newsletter!

The VAPAHCS LGBT Staff and Allies is a group of over 30 VA employees who began meeting in April, 2012. The purpose of LGBTSA is to raise awareness about LGBT Veteran and employee experiences at VAPAHCS through public relations campaign, staff training and resource development for the hospital system. Through community outreach, LGBTSA strives to increase VA enrollment among LGBT Veteran Patients and encourage employment applications from LGBT civilians and Veterans.

LGBTSA members work in a variety of departments across the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System including Social Work, Psychology, Medicine, Recreation Therapy, Engineering and Housekeeping to name a few. Members identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and as allies to the LGBT community. LGBTSA welcomes anyone who is interested in making VAPAHCS the choice for LGBT Veterans seeking care and LGBT people seeking employment.

Visit VAPAHCS LGBT Programs at
<http://www.paloalto.va.gov/lgbtsa.asp>

VAPAHCS LGBT Veteran Group Presented at the 2013 American Psychological Association Convention



The LGBT Veteran support group "Living Out Loud/Laughing Out Loud" will be presented at the [2013 APA Convention](#) in Honolulu, Hawaii on a panel discussion entitled "[Addressing Clinical and Policy Issues Related to LGBT Service Members](#)." This presentation is one of several that address issues related to [military service members](#) and [veterans](#). The APA Program states "APA President Donald Bersoff, PhD, JD, has formulated three military-inspired program tracks that focus on the issues surrounding our veterans and the men and women currently serving in the United States military."

Topics in this track include:

Treating Sexual Trauma in Military Personnel, Treating Children and Spouses of Military Personnel, and Assessment and Treatment of Military Personnel and Veterans.

If you will be attending the convention, please contact Heliana at 650 444-8586 for a VAPAHCS meet-up!