

Vets give all, get less in return

The VFW Department of Wyoming distributed a press release dated December 7, 2007 having to do with their position that veterans are not being properly supported in northern Wyoming.

"Support the Troops," is sometimes more rhetoric than reality. It's a great call to patriotism but the troops should be able to rely on customary and competent medical care when they return and are in need.

Instead, a Veterans Administration benefits representative position at the Sheridan VA hospital remains vacant.

In spite of the sparse population of Wyoming, many troops from this state have served in the danger areas of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as during WWII, Korea and Vietnam. A Denver bureaucrat and VA administrators in D.C. ignore this persistent demand in the country's least-populated state.

Perhaps someone should show them a map of Wyoming. The fact that the population is small does not dismiss the fact that the area is huge.

Wyoming's congressional delegation, governor's office and Wyoming's national VSOs have all been applying pressure to fill the necessary position but have been refused. The position remains unfilled.

For decades, a full-time VA veteran's service representation served in Sheridan to

provide area veterans with face-to-face counseling and claims assistance. For some reason, a Denver bureaucrat now thinks this position is unnecessary and the services can be provided by an occasional visit from Cheyenne.

As it stands now, there is not a full-time veteran's service representative between Helena, Montana and Cheyenne - a distance of nearly 700 miles.

What kind of a pinhead, uncaring person would make such a decision? One who mouths the words but does not back up the talk with action. It is almost certain she is one of the loudest "Support the Troops" voices. Now, all of a sudden, she is "cooking" the numbers to justify the refusal to hire a replacement veteran's service representative in Sheridan. No previous Denver manager took the same position which is, basically, that travel from Cheyenne when funds are available should suffice for those benefits whose travel to Sheridan would be much easier, closer and cheaper.

The Sheridan VA Medical Center is a major VA psychiatric and medical hospital. Hardly a place that dare offer less services than other VA facilities.

The State VFW Commander wrote: "It is clear to me that this decision demonstrates a lack of commitment and concern for the needs of Wyoming's veterans ..." The refusal to act is intolerable.

\$5000⁰⁰ to help renovate the Atlas Theater



Leadership Cheyenne Class of 2006 presented a check for \$5,000.00 for the 2nd Annual Runovation for the Atlas Theatre.

Pictured above (center), left to right - Chelsey McManus, Leadership Cheyenne; Harry Woods, Managing Director, Cheyenne Little Theatre Players; and Marie Datus, Board of Directors, Cheyenne Little Theatre Players. The presentation was made December 7, 2007 at the recent production of *Cockeyed* by William Missouri Downs.

Homeless Memorial Day - December 21st

For the 17th year, the Wyoming Coalition for the Homeless will sponsor Homeless Memorial Day at noon December 21st in front of the State Capitol Building.

Speakers will include the Rev William William Jividan, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Mayor Jack Spiker, The Rev. Elizabeth McVicker, Cheyenne Interfaith Hospitality Network, the Rev. Jon Laughlin, Grace United Methodist Church, Richard McCullough, Crossroads Clinic and several homeless individuals. Music will be provided by Earl Janack, Slow Trucks Turning.

The public is invited to attend and to remember those who died homeless in Cheyenne during the last two years. (The 2006 memorial was canceled because of bad weather).

For more information on the event contact Virginia Sellner at 634-8499.

What can we do about the spiraling violence?

Fifty years ago, a creep named Charles Starkweather began a killing spree that ended near Douglas, Wyoming. The Nebraska teenager and his younger girlfriend, Caril Ann Fugate, killed eleven, including her mother and two year-old sister. Indiscriminate in the choice of weapons and ages of their victims - they shot, stabbed and bludgeoned innocents from the baby sibling to age 70. Even those who offered help were killed.

Movies were made based on their exploits, as though to glamourize the pair.

Random violence is not new to us. It's not new to a society that embraces and markets mindless and violent video games and movies.

Maybe this past week was not exceptional. Maybe it's because it hit closer to Cheyenne that made it seem worse.

Starkweather is mentioned because that's how far back the State of Nebraska has to reach to find a mass murderer to compare to a 20-year old who went into one of Omaha's nicer shopping malls and shot a dozen others with an AK-47, eight of whom have died at this writing.

This guy in Omaha was smart enough to write a legible coherent note. But he didn't go out in the blaze of glory he envisioned. He shot himself. A coward to the end.

No sooner had that story circulated than two shootings in Colorado claimed innocent lives. These were in a youth missionary center in Arvada and the New Life Church in Colorado Springs. The shootings may be related - maybe not.

Have we reached a point in this country where no calling is exempt from misbehavior and no surroundings are safe from random violence? Schools all over the country have been chosen by madmen as a place to wreak havoc. Even an Amish school - a group that inflicts no harm or intrusion on others.

Now one of the largest churches in the United States. New Life Church was founded by the disgraced Ted Haggard and its congregation at one time totalled in the thousands.

With a population of 300,000,000, we are bound to have nuts - those who want to hurt others without regard to whom they may be. But has it gone over the edge? Are we resigned to the violence and just hope it isn't us or our loved ones killed?

In two of the three incidents referenced here, the gunman died on scene. In Starkweather's case, he was executed within a year and a half of his arrest. Now, it would be over be 10-20 years if a surviving shooter were sentenced to die for his horrific actions. What have we become?

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