

## **AVVA TOXIC EXPOSURE COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORT AND OVERVIEW**

**Nancy S. Switzer, Co-Chair**

**JULY 25, 2017**

Since our report from March 2017, Tom Berger, Town Owen and I were presenters at the Newport Education Center, Oregon State University, and the Portland VA Hospital Administrator and Oregon Public Broadcasting and Victoria, Texas. On April 17<sup>th</sup> VVA Chapter 978 held a Town Hall meeting I was a presenter with VVA Region 6 Director Michael Dempski in Frewsburg, New York. The Reverend Bob Lewis and his wife, AVVA Chapter representative did an outstanding job in developing this program. Then it was off to Rhode Island, Chapter 273 where Fran Gueremont, an AVVA Representative, John Weiss, RI VA Director, Mokie Porter and I were presenters.

### **TWO YEAR OVERVIEW:**

For the last two years we have worked so very hard to get the Toxic Exposure Act passed. Meeting with legislators – making phone calls. It was a combined effort through our organization and VVA that it did. Nadine and I would like to thank all of our members for putting in their efforts to get it done.

But we cannot stop there. We must continue to education not only our veterans and their families and the public, but most importantly the next generation of veterans, the Afghanistan, Iraqi and Gulf War, and the best way to do this is holding Town Hall meetings on Toxic Exposures.

The last two years have been busy ones for our committee. For the past two years AVVA has been a participant in over \_\_\_ Town Hall Meetings and since September of 2016 we have done 52.

We have worked closely with the VVA Agent Orange committee and Mokie Porter, Communications Director. We have worked together to edit the Power Point presentation for the leadership conference last year on how to hold a town hall meeting. We continue to send the Paper Safe, Survivor Benefits brochures to those having Town Hall meeting, and remain open to phone calls assisting families in any way possible.

In 2015 we developed a brochure “Has Your Child’s or Grandchild’s Health Been Affected by Your Military Service. This is a great brochure to hand out to families who feel their child has been affected by Dioxins and how they should be preparing for when the research is finished.

We are continuing to educate the public on Toxins that are readily available at many of the stores, for example weed killer Round Up.

The committee continues to monitor the Blue Water Navy legislation.

We would like to thank the members of our committee for their forever support, they are: Kathy Andras, John Birch, Pat Furno, Bobbie Morris, Mokie Porter, Dennis Waling, and Special Advisors: Tanya Lynese, Gary Lynese, Mark McCabe and Tom Owen. In closing it is with great sympathy that Gary passed away this past year. He was a true supporter of what we, AVVA and VVA were doing and with his own personal struggle with his daughter, Tanya and her medical issues. I feel who knew whom fought harder this past year in his memory and will miss him and his compassion.

On behalf of Nadine and myself we would like to thank the Board of Directors for their unceasing support throughout these past two years as co-chairs.

**AVVA Toxic Exposure Committee Activities Report**  
**Nadine Owen, AVVA Toxic Exposure Committee Co-Chair**  
**Tom Owen, Special Advisor, VVA Toxic Exposure Committee**  
**7-23-17**

In March, Town Hall meetings were held in conjunction with Samaritan Health Services (5 hospitals/102 clinics) at their Newport Educational Center on March 9, 2017 and at Oregon State University on March 10, 2017. Panel included Dr. Tom Berger, Director of VVA Veterans Health Council, Nancy Switzer, Founder and past president of the AVVA and Senior VSO, Jim Pace. Both events were well received with much participation by veterans of all eras and their families, as well as, local VSO's, elected official and area newspaper(Newport). On March 11, 2017, the same panel presented at the Portland VA Hospital. In attendance were veterans (and some family members) of all eras, as was the Portland VA Hospital Administrator and Oregon Public Broadcasting who filmed the presentation so as to be a part of a Vietnam War series that they are producing to air at a later date.

Both Samaritan Health Services and the Portland VA Hospital have expressed wanting to have a Toxic Exposure presentation geared specifically toward their medical staff. We are currently in the organizational process of doing just that with the assistance of Dr. Tom Berger.

Several phone conversations and organizational meetings with Samaritan Health Services Veterans Advocate, Kyle Hatch and CEO, Dr. Larry Mullins have taken place to incorporate the Veteran's Health History Questionnaire as suggested by

VVA. With the assistance of Dr. Tom Berger, we continue to move forward in this effort.

#### Summary

24 total presentations across 6 states since last convention. This included 17 Town Halls and 7 presentations to special interest groups which included but not limited to: State Commander of the American Legion which lead to a full Town Hall with the Council of American Legion Executives where 10 regions were represented. Another presentation with the Oregon State VFW Executives lead to a Town Hall for the Central Oregon Veterans Council that included representatives from the American Legion, VFW, Band of Brothers and DAV. From this came the invitation to do a Town Hall at the St. Charles Cancer Center which was live streamed to their satellite clinics. As noted above, 2 presentations to different principals within the Samaritan Health Services organization have led to two Town Halls and requests from them for further participation with VVA / AVVA and the toxic exposure issue. Interest has been expressed by both Samaritan Health and the administration at the Portland VA for a forum directed at medical providers and staff.

Many thanks go out to John and Willa Burgess, Bev Stewart, Tony Molina, Connie Hunter, Jim Newman, Bill Ferrell and Gary McAdams who have helped us along the trail to successfully accomplish this mission...to educate, share and listen to veterans and their families.