



California Forumeer

American GI Forum

<http://www.agif.org>

Serving Veterans Since
1948

California Forumeer
2nd. Quarter 2006



Commander Flores and Chairwoman Tinoco with 1st Sergeant Acosta and his family

The sun was shining and the cool wind blowing on this beautiful Monday morning as I drove towards the Palo Alto VA Hospital and Rehabilitation facilities where I was to meet with First Sergeant Jesse Acosta and his family. My mind was fixed on what Commander Felipe Flores had shared with me regarding this veteran and the circumstances surrounding his stay at the VA's Blind Center Rehabilitation facilities. First Sergeant Acosta's early morning run in Iraq, was interrupted by incoming mortar rounds with one landing fifty feet away and the shock waves and shrapnel flying through the air knocking down Sergeant Acosta and one of his comrades. The shrapnel that hit his face injured him such that he was taken to a hospital at Landstuhl, Germany and then to Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington D.C. After a short stay there, First Sergeant Acosta made his way to the Palo Alto School for the blind.

AGIF-California Chairwoman Marianna Tinoco met me and introduced me to First Sergeant Jesse Acosta, his wife Consuelo and their daughter Brittany. The Acostas also have two other offspring, Jesse Jr. and Marlo who could not join us this day. Our discussion progressed from his training and progress as a person with a new outlook on life to the demands placed on a person with challenges and every desire to continue a normal life. He mentioned that being able to be with and to hold his family close was in itself a blessing and that though difficult, the experiences in his new world would pave a way to renewed strength and a productive life. Hailing from Santa Fe Springs, he anticipates meeting up with old friends from Veterans In Community Service (VICS) at the AGIF State Conference next month where he will be a guest of honor. Summing up his situation, First Sergeant Acosta was honest and frank when he said "a new generation has come in", referring to the new wave of soldiers and veterans that today hold up the banner. He was quick to say "where would we be today without the sacrifices of those that have gone before us", referring to and giving Vietnam Veterans their due as catalysts for a new order and change.

In retrospect and though grateful, First Sergeant Acosta lamented as to the short time that he was allowed to readjust. He said "thirty days is just not sufficient time to deal with the type of adjustments needed by profound physical changes such as mine. Additionally and though his stay in the VA's Blind Center Rehabilitation facilities was good, a one size fits all approach is really not the best way to handle cases such as mine, he said. Changes in the way things are done are needed and a more specialized approach to rehabilitating soldiers like myself are in order, said First Sergeant Acosta. On a personal note, I found the Acosta family to be full of pride and hope for the future. We wish them well as they venture into a new chapter in their lives. We will always be thankful to them because it is through their courage and sacrifice that we remain "The Home of the Brave and the Land of the Free"! **A.G. Lerma**

Inside this issue:

Commander's Message	2
Project Amiga Awards	2
Casillas/Rodriguez Cha.	2
State Conference Agenda	3
Mr/Miss AGIF Contest	3
Veterans In Com. Service	4
National VSO Program	5
Membership Application	5
Vet-Hire Program	6
Trujillo Team	6
Board of Directors	6
Larry Amaya Chapter	7
Nat. Exec. Dir. Appointed	7
Fisher House, Palo Alto VA	8
Advertising	8



The Forumeer is your Quarterly Newsletter, submit ideas and materials for the next issue by July 31, 2006. Submit articles highlighting your chapter's events with the names of people who make events happen. Mail materials to: California Forumeer c/o: A. G. Lerma 765 Story Rd. Ste 150 San Jose, CA 95122 or call at 408-288-9470. E-mail to: alerna@agif.org <http://www.agif.org>



COMMANDERS'S MESSAGE
American GI Forum California State Conference
June 2006



Fellow Veterans and Family Members:

Thank you for attending the American GI Forum California State Conference. The Conference Planning Committee has worked diligently to have the best conference possible and our hosting chapter, EL Camino Real, welcomes you and hopes that you will enjoy your visit while attending the conference.

I want to thank you for giving me the privilege and honor of serving as your State Commander for the past two years. We have successfully accomplished many of our minor goals and several of our major goals, including : Effectively working with the California State Department of Veterans Affairs, the leadership of the Palo Alto Veterans Administration, the San Jose Readjustment Counseling Center and the development of our Veterans Service Officer training program. I am pleased with the overall work we have done to help our fellow veterans and I hope that this work will continue with the newly elected leadership and administration.

I am encouraged by the many good things we have done together, but I am disappointed with the misguided energy that constantly interferes with our efforts to move forward. I leave you now, but as I leave, I am reminded of why I decided to become the state leader of this organization. Aside from my personal commitment to my family, I am a veteran first and my first commitment is to them. The issues are many, but I have been successful to some degree in resolving their concerns and problems. In working with them, they have made it clear, that unless we are prepared to commit ourselves to protecting the rights and liberties of all veterans and their families, we may be facing a future of uncertainty. Undoubtedly, we owe them a great deal of gratitude. The success and performance of my leadership may be questioned in the future, or perhaps even now, but I can assure you that my decisions reflect not a personal interest, but the interest of making this organization a successful one. I want to thank my family and my friends who have made my two year stay worthwhile, especially my wife, Estrella and a friend of the veteran, Ms. Marianna Tinoco, State Chairwoman. I wish you well and may God bless all of you.

Respectfully, Felipe Flores Jr.—Commander, American GI Forum State of California



Project Amiga
Presents
“PRIMAVERA”

Annual Awards Concert and Talent Showcase
Thursday June 22, 2006 * 6:00 PM

Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
555 West Temple Street Los Angeles, CA. 90012
For Info: 213-680-5200



Honoring : Tony Gallegos, Terry Castaneda and Paula Crisostomo



Letters:

In the last 2 years, we have lost 4 members of our unit. 2 years ago, we lost our first member. Richard Carmona. A year later, we lost 2 members; Lupe Rivera, and Manuel Alvarez. This week, we lost, and buried Louie Avila, our Sgt.at Arms. Louie served with the 40th Div. in Korea, with 13 other Chicanos from Victorville, they all left together to Korea. When he was discharged from the Army, Louie joined the Marine Corps. and served 4 years there. When he was discharged from the Marines, Louis joined the Navy CB's . When he came out, he became a construction worker, until he retired. Louie (Louie, Louie, as he was called) was a great member. His heart finally gave out, even with a pacemaker. We buried Louie, yesterday, with full military honors.

Felix G. Diaz, Commander, Casillas Rodriguez Chapter



AGENDA

Friday June 30, 2006

- 8:30 AM Continental Breakfast and Registration
- 10:00 AM Call To Order, State Commander Felipe Flores
 - Presentation of Colors, Sgt @ Arms, Johnny Lozano
 - Prayer, Chaplain Pete Magana
 - Welcome, Mayor of Santa Fe Springs, Louie Gonzalez
 - Introduced by Jake Alarid
 - Roll Call, Secretary Helen Galvan
 - Reading of the Minutes of Last Meeting, Secretary Helen Galvan
 - Committee Assignments
- 10:30 AM Reports
 - (reports should be in writing and submitted to secretary)
 - Officers, Forum
 - Officers, Women
 - Officers, Youth
 - Chapters
- 12:00 Noon Youth Luncheon
 - Luncheon Speaker
- 1:00 PM Workshop Health/Diabetes
- 2:00 PM Continue Reports
 - Veterans Outreach Program Willie Galvan
 - Educations
 - Veteran/VSO Alfred Lugo/Felipe Flores
 - Civil Rights Alan Clayton
 - 2005 Convention Report Willie Galvan
- 6:00 PM Women Forum Dinner
- 7:00 PM Miss AGIF and Mr. AGIF Speech Contest



Saturday July 1, 2006

- 8:00 AM Continental Breakfast
 - 9:00 AM Reconvene Meeting
 - Continue Reports
 - Credentials
 - Resolutions
 - 10:30 AM Veterans Workshop
 - 12:00 Noon Commanders Luncheon
 - Luncheon Speaker
 - Special Guest Recognition
 - 1:00 PM Election of Officers
 - New Business
 - (2008 Convention Site, October BOD Meeting)
 - Old Business (Outstanding Chapter, Forumeer of the Year)
 - Oath of Office, Incoming Officers
- ADJOURN**



Miss AGIF Competitions and National Conference Registration

I cannot tell you what the other states are doing but Kansas is having the contests this year, and we have more contestants than we have had for several years. Each state kind of does their own thing and has their own forms for the State level contests. The packets of information for the National Contests will be mailed to the State chairwomen soon by Irene Velasquez, who is the coordinator. I will attach the National rules so that you can link them to the national AGIF web-site. I will attach the entry forms, but they are in Microsoft Publisher and not everybody has that. Also, National Commnader Tony Morales has agreed to extend early bird registration to July 1, 2006. **Barbara Olivas (620) 356-4070**



Veterans In Community Service, Inc.

**Congratulates the American G. I. Forum
and
honors our men and women in military uniform**

**at the
California State Conference
Santa Fe Springs, CA**

June 30 – July 1, 2006

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A Commitment to Service
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BUILDING A NATIONAL AGIF VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM

The key to building a good national program to serve veterans within the American GI Forum must revolve around “Education”. There is much to know and understand where veterans and federal benefits are concerned. Reems of regulations and endless beaurocracy has to be understood and in some cases overcome. Clearly this will require time and much discipline, not to mention the necessary planning, organizing and leadership effort.

Our national effort to deliver veteran services in a consistent and meaningful manner will depend on many factors. Of all these factors, the “Education” theme must resonate and begin at the grass roots level within the individual chapters across the country. That is to say that the national organization must set forth a strategy for developing and growing a base of knowledge and charge each viable chapter with developing from within members who know and understand the objectives and mission of the Veteran Service Officer.

To begin, an understanding of what veteran services are is essential. VA resources available and in place within a given region must be understood and accepted as a means of reaching and serving the veteran today. Locals must accept the responsibility of building motivated volunteers and also critical alliances with other functioning veterans organizations such as the DAV, American Legion, VFW, Vet Centers, County Veteran Service Officers, the VVA and many others. Most of these organizations have plowed through similar ground and are ready to help when it comes to delivering services to veterans. Federal, state and county VA agencies are crucial and can and will provide key support and resources.

Current providers of these services come in many categories. Surveys show that training and competency varies all over the place depending on where you go. You have to accept the good with the bad and try your level best to make an improvement through your individual efforts. All of these elements must be understood, coordinated and disseminated systematically in order for all levels of the organization to begin to contribute collectively to a new order supporting this national effort. The communication of these plans will need to utilize all means of communication including local, state and national media tools. Newsletters, websites and conferences must become the central tools for creating a focus and imparting and strengthening this base knowledge. The leadership must recognize, give priority to and widely communicate what is being proposed here.

A culture of caring must be embraced and nurtured for the Veteran, Family, related organizations and our membership. Our approach must include all of the elements of sound management including Planning, Organizing Leading and Controlling focused on communication and the education and advancement of a service oriented organization. **A.G. Lerma**



General Membership Application

Qualifications to join: Any honorably discharged veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States is eligible for membership, as is any person who is approved by the membership. Chapters hold monthly meetings. The Mid-Year Conference is held during the first quarter of the year. The State Conference is held during the second quarter of the year and the National Conference is held in August.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Chapter Name _____
 Email _____

DUES (Dues are \$30.00 for most chapters)

Annual membership dues includes local, state and national dues. Members receive a subscription to The Forumeer, the official AGIF Newsletter, and discounts to the AGIF’s conferences and events. Mail application and dues to: AGIF State Secretary (Helen Galvan) P.O. Box 1681 Santa Maria, California 93456. You may also send application to your nearest AGIF chapter.

• Veteran _____ Yes _____ No • New Member _____ Renewal _____ • Gender _____ Male _____ Female



AGIF Vet-Hire Program

Vet-Hire is a citizen-centered outreach initiative sponsored by the American GI Forum that is designed to assist Federal Agencies recruit veterans from our community who are interested in being considered for federal employment. The initiative is designed to assist Federal Agencies improve upon the historical under representation of Hispanics in federal employment.

The American GI Forum has developed this program as an outreach strategy for registering veterans from our communities who are interested in federal employment for electronic referral to participating Federal Agencies. Studies conducted by the Federal Government indicate that relatives and friends were the most common form of federal job information, encouraging coaching and guiding friends and relatives through the federal employment process. What VET-HIRE does and will do is provide electronic access to a robust pool of Hispanics seeking federal employment with participating federal recruiters located anywhere in the world for jobs anywhere in the world based on geographical availability, employment interests, veteran status, etc.

VET-HIRE is not an "application" per se. VET-HIRE is a simple registration of basic personal information indicating your basic federal employment interests which is filed into a database for referral to participating Federal Agencies. Recruiters at participating Federal Agencies are still responsible for "recruiting" you, i.e. obtaining a federal application from you and a detailed resume.

Students seeking student employment with Federal Agencies can register online at <http://www.agif.us> or <http://www.agif.org>. This is a specially-designed Student Intake and Registration Form for students. Students attending any accredited academic or vocational program enrolled as part-time or more, are eligible to participate in temporary and career-related student employment opportunities. You can register as both a student and veteran on the same form through the Vet-Hire initiative or the student form.



THE TRUJILLO TEAM

Ernie and Ramona come from different areas of expertise. Ramona is a retiree from the Communications industry. Ernie from the Research and Development in the Defense industry. They both have various volunteer backgrounds within the Santa Clara County community. For years they have done their own Real Estate investments and have decided to join the ranks as Realtors. They have joined Century 21 Champion because it is a very well known company and is

known internationally. Ernie & Ramona are on their way to specialize as Senior Realtors to work with the Senior community by earning the SRES designation and also to earn the Graduate Realtors Institute (GRI) designation. They are members of The Santa Clara County Association Of Realtors, the National Association of Realtors, The California Association of Realtors and the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals of Santa Clara County. Call on them for advice and assistance in your Real Estate needs: Ramona and Ernie at: (408) 799-1867 / 1872 or office (408) 445-4109 / 4110 Ernie & Ramona Trujillo Direct: (408) 445-4110 Voice Mail: (408) 445-4110 Mobile: (408) 799-1872 Fax: (408) 978-8396 Email: etrujillo@century21champion.com Website: <http://www.century21champion.com/etrujillo>

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"Los Angeles Area Chapter on the Move"

The Larry Amaya Chapter was reconstituted six years ago by seasoned members of the G. I. Forum. It was reorganized by Tony Gallegos, Nick Sandoval and others who had been active in veterans issues for years. Many of the veterans came from the cities of Pico Rivera, Montebello and East Los Angeles. Nick Sandoval, long active in the VFW, was elected Commander. Thanks to the generosity of Veterans in Community Service (VICS) and its President, Tony Gallegos, the Chapter was given office space at VICS' headquarters which was located in the city of Whittier. The difficulty of recruiting veterans to the Chapter was daunting yet the Chapter was able to slowly bring in new members. The Chapter meetings were scheduled monthly on Saturdays that brought in some of the older veterans as it grew.

In July 2004 VICS moved its offices to a large state-of-the-art facility in nearby Santa Fe Springs. VICS gave the Chapter a spacious office, telephone service, computer equipment and room to conduct meetings for large groups. By 2005 the membership recruitment began in earnest at the monthly Saturday meetings that included menudo, pan dulce and gourmet coffee for all attendees. New concepts to make the Chapter viable before the community were instituted. Among them was the Chapter's name change to the Los Angeles Larry Amaya Chapter. The concept of including Los Angeles in the Chapter's title was to have a Los Angeles identification which is a selling point of geographical significance. In honor of Larry Amaya's G. I. Forum's legacy, his name was included in the Chapter title. The members also voted to create a separate non-profit corporation for the purpose of soliciting foundation monies, qualifying for government grants and community fund raising. This allows donors to deduct their donations to a federally recognized 501 (c) 3. non profit corporation.

In May the Chapter recruited 30 new adult members and signed up 15 youth members. Credit goes to Richard Vasquez a member who went out and personally recruited people to join the Chapter along with youth members. Also other Chapter members on a one by one basis have been signing up new Forumeers. In the design stage is a fund raising event this summer to increase funds for the Chapter's treasury. The members also voted to support VICS golf tournament taking place on November 9 in nearby City of Industry. Proceeds from the golf tournament will go for scholarships to veterans, especially those who have seen duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is to be an annual event for VICS. This is an activity that the Chapter can be active in annually because the scholarship proceeds are for veterans and their families.

Fernando Del Rio is the Los Angeles Larry Amaya Chapter's current Commander. He states: "There are many issues facing our community and veterans that need to be addressed. However, in order to be effective and address those issues we must make the Chapter viable and strong. First is to increase our membership which means people power. Secondly, is to increase funds for our treasury because money is power. If we combine these two priorities then we can make the American G. I. Forum an organization that commands attention and respect."

There is a statement to make and that is where credit must be recognized. Veterans in Community Service is the reason why the Chapter is moving ahead. VICS President Tony Gallegos and board members Fred Rodriguez, John Perez, and Corky Emmett of VICS are Chapter members. Ramon Diaz, also on the VICS board, is involved in the Rudy Escalante Chapter in Orange County but is in full support of the Los Angeles Larry Amaya Chapter. It may be that the American G. I. Forum won't return to the glory days of the 60's, 70's and early 80's but it can become a powerful voice for veterans and the Latino community with increased membership and a strong financial base to back its members. **Fernando Del Rio**



Appointment of American GI Forum Interim National Executive Director

"It is with the greatest of confidence that as National Commander I appoint you Interim National Executive Director. The national executive committee has voted unanimous in favor of this appointment." These were the words with which American GI Forum National Commander Antonio Morales conveyed the appointment of Dan Sandoval (current AGIF National Vice Commander) to the position of American GI Forum Interim National Executive Director. Commander Morales went on to say that he is confident that Dan Sandoval is up to the assigned task and that the Executive Director has responsibilities and duties which are outlined in the AGIF constitution. The Executive Director will oversee the national office and will be provided with a new computer and other equipment to help him communicate with the AGIF officers, membership, staff and perform his duties. Commander Morales wished Mr. Sandoval good luck and stated that he looks forward to working closely with Mr. Sandoval in his new assignment.



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FISHER HOUSE, VETERANS HOSPITAL, PALO ALTO, CA

The latest Fisher House was dedicated on April 19, 2006 at the Palo Alto, California VA Hospital grounds. Mr. Gordon Mansfield, Deputy Secretary Veterans Administration was on hand to applaud the efforts of many in adding this new home for visiting family member of soldiers recovering from injuries suffered while on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. Commander Felipe Flores was among the many dignitaries on hand to kick-off operations of this latest addition of Fisher Homes.

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[Http://www.agif.org](http://www.agif.org)



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