



# NDIN BRIEF

The Newsletter of New Directions, Inc.

Fall 2007

## NDI Treatment Program is International Model



Although New Directions is well known in Southern California as a model treatment program for veterans with substance abuse issues, the agency's reputation is now beginning to transcend state, and even international borders.

On June 21, a group of treatment specialists from the Korean Alcohol Research Foundation visited New Directions in order to tour the facility, and get a better understanding of our cutting edge program.

The Korean Alcohol Research Foundation (KARF) is a "public-private" partnership, funded largely by the Korean alcoholic beverage industry, and supported by the government and private research centers. The Foundation began in the early part of this century in response to a growing alcohol and drug problem in South Korea's larger cities and rural areas. Its facilities include a large hospital in Seoul, for inpatient detoxification and therapy, plus a growing network of community centers and outreach efforts.

When the organization's main hospital opened in early 2004, professionals and leaders from across the spectrum of Korean medicine, academia and business applauded the facility as a necessary and valuable addition to the nation's healthcare and social service infrastructure. Recently, KARF was highlighted as "the authority on the country's drinking culture" in international news coverage of Korea's efforts to move away from a heavy social and business emphasis on drinking.

KARF has regularly sought expertise in substance abuse concepts from outside Korea, and maintains ongoing relationships with service providers in the U.S. (New Directions was one of several American agencies visited by the group). New Directions salutes the Korean Alcohol Research Foundation for its commitment to the study of substance abuse and recovery.

## And Finally...



Many thanks to In-N-Out Burger for treating our veterans to tasty burgers and fries on Thursday, September 27.



## New Funding Aids Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan

New Directions was recently awarded a \$2.75 million grant in order to provide comprehensive services for returning veterans of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). The funds will help NDI roll out its new initiative, Operation Welcome Home, which is targeted specifically toward returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The three-year grant was awarded by the Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund (IADIF) of the California Community Foundation.

Operation Welcome Home offers a broad array of outpatient services to OIF/OEF veterans, including case management, legal assistance, job training and referrals, family reunification, individual and group therapy and assistance with housing. New Directions also plans to open a new living facility that is specifically tailored to the needs of newly returning veterans.

Over 1.5 million U.S. military personnel have been deployed so far in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of these OEF/OIF veterans are returning home with serious physical and mental health problems, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other disabilities resulting from combat. Returning veterans are also at high risk for depression, anxiety and other psychiatric issues.

New Directions' goal is to ease the transition of veterans from combat to civilian life, and to help these veterans avoid problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, serious mental illness, poverty and homelessness.

New Directions is extremely grateful to IADIF and the California Community Foundation for their generous support of our mission— and for their philanthropic leadership on behalf of our nation's veterans.

## Staff Profile

*Rickie L. Slaughter*



Rickie Slaughter is an alumnus of the New Directions program and also a dedicated staff member. He has been employed with NDI since 2000, steadily working his way up to the position

of Program Manager. On October 24, Rickie will be honored with a Personal Achievement Award at the 2007 McKinney-Vento Awards in Washington, D.C. He was chosen for the award by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, a non-profit agency that serves as the legal arm of the nationwide movement to end homelessness.

For Rickie, however, the road to success was anything but straight and narrow. His problems began as a soldier in Vietnam, when he started using drugs as a relief from the stress of combat. After the war, he settled in Houston, Texas, where he was introduced to crack cocaine. Hoping to get a handle on his drug problem, Rickie did a "geographic," and moved to Las Vegas. There, he met a woman and lived with her for 18 months. But, when his girlfriend announced that she was pregnant, Rickie gave her \$600 for an abortion, and fled town. He soon became homeless, and he resorted to criminal activity in order to survive and support his habit. Ultimately, he was convicted of robbery and sent to prison for three years.

It took two decades of addiction to drugs and alcohol for Rickie to hit rock bottom. Finally, sick of sleeping in alleys and eating out of dumpsters, he decided that he needed help. He found his way to New Directions,

**New Directions' 12th Annual Veterans Day Golf Classic**  
**Monday, November 5, 2007**




Register online at [www.ndvets.org](http://www.ndvets.org) or call 310-914-4045

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**NEW DIRECTIONS, INC.**

11303 Wilshire Boulevard  
VA Building 116  
Los Angeles, CA 90073-1003

where he was given the tools to rebuild his life. After graduating from the program, he studied to become a certified Drug Addictions Recovery Specialist, and he stayed on at New Directions as a staff member. Grateful for being able to live a sober life, Rickie has said that he "wanted to give back to others, what was so freely given to me." Rickie gives back to others every day at New Directions, where he serves as a role model to residents and staff members alike.

Twenty-one years after leaving his girlfriend, Rickie returned to Las Vegas to find out that he had a son, Rickie L. Slaughter, Jr. – and also a grandson, Rickie L. Slaughter III. He now feels happy and "blessed" to be reunited with a family that he never knew he had.

Congratulations, Rickie, on your Personal Achievement Award – and thanks for being a great steward and an asset to New Directions!

## From the Executive Director

New Directions, Inc. is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year by looking confidently ahead and planning for the future. Our roots go even deeper than 15 years, dating to a time when the Veterans Administration discontinued a program that New Directions Co-founder John Keaveney and two other vets believed was essential. That VA program, also called New Directions, had benefited these three men, and they were determined to continue it because they knew it would benefit others. Thus in 1989, John Keaveney began a new, nonprofit organization also called New Directions. He and I soon joined forces, beginning the work that ultimately led us to opening our first program in 1992, and in 1997 we opened the New Directions Regional Opportunity Center in Building 116 at the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration campus.

So much has happened in the last 15 years, but our work is far from done. To date, more than 6,400 veterans, men and women alike, have benefited from our services. We are seeing that veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom share an experience much like that of their predecessors. And yet there are significant differences. The War on Terror has produced trauma never seen before in the history of U.S. military operations. From Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) complicated



by the constant vigilance for IED (improvised explosive devices) and the inability to distinguish friend from foe, the battlefield experience has changed profoundly.

This new generation of veterans presents New Directions with a new set of challenges. Among them is putting programs into place that will help prevent the cycle of pain and despair that leads to homelessness. While there is an ongoing need to provide housing for elderly and disabled veterans, that is now compounded exponentially by the very high survivor-to-casualty ratio resulting from the War on Terror. There is a long-term obligation ahead to care for those who are profoundly injured and will require life-long assistance, but for whom VA benefits run out after two years.

As always, your support is essential to our ability to provide services and express gratitude to our veterans. Whether you make an outright gift or whether you participate in our 12th Annual Golf Classic—or both—please consider everything you owe to those who have served our country. I encourage you to make a gift that truly says “Thank You” on Veterans Day.

Toni Reinis

## NDI Honors and Transitions

Cindy Young has joined New Directions as Director of Development & Marketing. She comes to NDI with vast experience in public relations, communications and development. Most recently, Cindy headed the Development Department for USC’s School of Theatre.

On September 27th Executive Director Toni Reinis was recognized for her advocacy work with homeless veterans by A Community of Friends during their 5th Annual Awards Dinner, “Beyond Perceptions.” A Community of Friends is a non-profit housing developer that works to provide homes for people with special needs, and is NDI’s partner in our next project – 147 units of permanent, supportive housing in the San Fernando Valley.

Clinician Dan Field, LCSW, has been appointed New Directions’ first Operation Welcome Home Program Supervisor. Dan will oversee services to veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and assist NDI in developing new programs specifically targeted to this growing population of veterans.

*Thanks to SpringBoard members for putting together our 1st Annual Texas Hold ‘em Tournament and Fundraiser Held on August 2nd.*

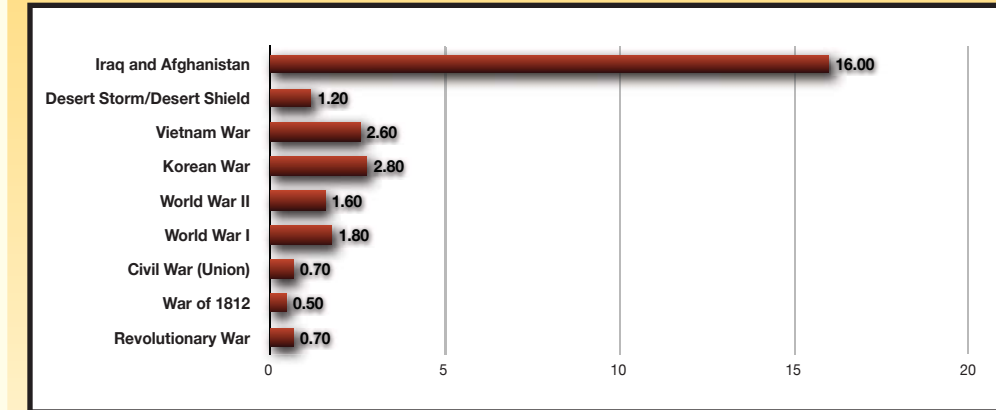
*This wildly popular event raised over \$4,200 for New Directions.*

*Many thanks, also, to Factor’s Deli owner Marvin Markowitz, who generously donated his private club space and all the food for this event!*

## Unprecedented Number of Soldiers Suffering Major Injuries

When compared to other U.S. conflicts, an unprecedented number of American soldiers are surviving major injuries during the current War on Terror. The ratio of killed-to-wounded is markedly different than in previous wars, due mostly to improvements in medical technology, as well as the widespread use of IEDs (improvised explosive devices) by radical insurgents. So far, more than 50,000 soldiers have suffered non-mortal wounds, and over 4,000 men and women have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Number of Wounded Soldiers per Fatality in Major American Wars:



Source: Linda Blumes, “Soldiers Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan: The Long-term Costs of Providing Veterans Medical Care and Disability Benefits,” John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, January 2007

**On October 12th two accomplished graduates of New Directions, Steve Keasal and Karen Hawkes, were honored at the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition’s 12th Annual Celebrating Success Breakfast in Santa Monica. Congratulations to Steve and Karen for their recent achievements. Your stories of recovery and success are an inspiration for those who follow in your path.**

Karen Hawkes



my life – just waiting to surface.

Until my senior year in high school, I excelled, even playing on the high school basketball team. In my senior year, things started to change – and my grades plummeted. I was kicked off the basketball team and was forced to attend summer school in order to graduate. I felt like a failure. I joined the U.S. Navy as a way of making my family proud and earning money to go to college.

After suffering trauma while in the military, I started using drugs

I grew up in south Los Angeles and had a fairly normal childhood, but since the age of three I felt different. I didn’t understand why I felt this way, yet I believed there was something dark in

recreationally. Within a matter of years I found myself homeless and living on the streets of the San Fernando Valley, smoking crack cocaine. Finally, after 20 years of addiction to drugs and alcohol – with intermittent periods spent in a number of jails – I decided enough was enough.

Two years ago, after getting out of jail for yet another time, I asked my parole officer to bring me to New Directions. I knew that I would need a long-term, intensive program in order to straighten up. New Directions helped me recover from my addictions and turn my life around. I am currently working at the VA as an outreach worker, extending my hand to other addicts who are suffering like I once did. I now live with my partner of several years, and we have our own apartment. I continue to share the message of recovery with the residents of New Directions, and I participate in the agency’s alumni program.

## Who’s On Board?



Bob Longo joined New Directions’ Board of Directors in 2004, and currently serves as Chair of the Marketing Committee and the Golf Steering Committee, where he oversees the planning of New Directions’ primary annual fundraiser.

Bob was born and raised in Chicago. At eighteen he joined the Navy, and went on to serve three tours of duty in Vietnam. He was honorably discharged in December of 1969. Bob states, “December 19, 1969 was the best day of my life, but also the strangest. One night I was manning an M-60 machine gun on our base camp perimeter and, literally,

just a few hours later I was sitting at my sister’s kitchen table in San Jose. I noticed that my niece and nephew were staring at all the cuts and bruises on my arms. All I could think was, ‘you made it back in one piece you lucky SOB?’” Four days after being discharged, Bob was back in Chicago, wholly immersed in civilian life.

A few months later, Bob returned to California and enrolled at UCLA. “I was 22 years old....going on 40 and this was my second-chance.” Having laser-like focus and a sense of being behind, he earned his Bachelor degree, Magna cum Laude, in just three years. Bob claims this to be one of his proudest accomplishments – since by his own admission, he was not a serious-minded student prior to military service. During his UCLA years, Bob was involved in community outreach, and he helped recruit hundreds of other Vietnam veterans to the campus. After graduation, he entered UCLA’s

Steve Keasal



home a problem that had been with me all my life – and grown out of control while I worked as an Airborne Ranger: an unhealthy thirst for excitement.

It did not take long for me to destroy myself. I was hopelessly engaged in all kinds of addictive behavior. Soon enough, I was thrown in jail. There, by the grace of God, I was visited by a Vietnam veteran named Buzz Holcomb, who told me about a program called New Directions. Upon release from jail I entered the program and got help for my

addictions, my PTSD and my legal problems, and I learned how to live a healthier life. The year I spent at New Directions was not easy, but I was tired of being a loser, so I persevered.

Today, I thank God for three and a half years of sobriety. Each day I experience life, not escapism. I now have a handle on my anger and dramatics. I also have a clean court record, which is very important to me. Currently, I am learning to be a broker at a very established securities firm. I feel like I have been given a second chance at life.

More important than anything else, I have learned to care about other people. Loving and helping others allows me fulfillment and a sense of purpose I had never known before. If I can give back to one other person all that has been given to me – then I will consider my life a success.

business school and earned an MBA.

After completing his education, Bob joined Procter & Gamble’s marketing department in Cincinnati, Ohio. A few years later he returned to Los Angeles and joined the marketing team at Carnation Company (now Nestlé). He spent the next few decades working for a number of high profile marketing services companies.

In 1996, Bob and his wife Mary founded Cross-Sector Communications, a marketing consulting company. Together, they develop and implement marketing and sales strategies for other companies. Recent assignments include business development for websites, medical/dental services marketing and work for leading college alumni magazines. In his free time, Bob enjoys golf – but, he claims that aside from Mary, his true love is *Marketing*.