DAV, VA Focus on Women Veterans

San Bernardino DAV Chapter 12 members helped host the women veterans event, bringing in more than a dozen local and national agencies to provide information on benefits and services.

You can often tell the men in a crowd who have served in the military. Whether it’s a fresh haircut and clean shave or a certain posture or poise, male veterans are generally easy to spot. Women veterans, however, are much more difficult to identify, and it’s still somewhat rare that they are asked about their service.

It’s an unfair, though evolving, reality. One problem that keeps coming up for women who have served in the military is that many just do not realize they qualify as veterans. To help overcome that hurdle, the Loma Linda VA Healthcare System in California partnered with San Bernardino DAV Chapter 12 to host their seventh annual event to honor the women who have served our nation. This year’s VA On the Move picnic event focused on one of the most important things for women veterans—their families.
“Our women veterans are so proud to have served, and we just wanted to make sure their families could see how proudly they served,” said Lisa Roybal, the women veterans program manager for the Loma Linda VA Healthcare System and a 20-year Navy Nurse Corps veteran. “We also know the younger population of women veterans have families, and they want to include them, so we wanted to invite them all out to spend the day together.”

VA On the Move is an initiative to reach out to veterans in the community to inform them about benefits and programs, rather than waiting for the veterans to approach the VA.

“As a veteran, this event speaks to me,” said Army veteran Rosa Garcia, who attended the event with her daughter. “Especially now, as women are getting more involved in combat roles, we have to support each other and each other’s families.”

For Chapter 12 Commander Richard Valdez, the event was a definite success. “A lot of the women I’ve talked to today have said they have been finding out information they just did not know was available,” he said. “Our whole goal here was not only to show women veterans that we are standing up for them, but also that there are federal and local agencies that are out there to help them.”

Hailing from the state with the country’s largest women veteran population, Chapter 12 has zeroed in on the increasing need for women’s programs. They are helping to purchase equipment for women veterans at the Loma Linda VA who have completed the biofeedback training course. Biofeedback is a process that teaches patients to harness their own mind to control thoughts, emotions and behavior. With the Chapter’s assistance, women veterans will be able to continue the process at home.

As part of the VA On the Move event, Chapter 12 also opened up
its Veterans Exploration Garden on site for veterans to experience. The Chapter also invited an equine-assisted therapy group from Redlands, Calif., to give a public demonstration of how horses can aid those struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder. These efforts are all in line with Chapter 12’s mission to produce tangible results for the veterans of the community, and the overall DAV mission to fulfill our promises to veterans and their families.