

# Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## Returning troops deserve support

By Barry VanderKelen

On this Veterans Day, my thoughts turn to the support returning soldiers deserve. While the Veterans Administration has extensive programs, the number of returning soldiers overloads the system.

The needs of our returning soldiers are staggering. In “Supporting our Troops, Veterans and their Families,” a report issued by the California Community Foundation ([www.calfund.org](http://www.calfund.org)), the following facts jump out:

- At least 20 percent of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, approximately 380,000, suffer from posttraumatic stress syndrome or severe depression;
- Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan wars experience an unemployment rate 2

percent higher than the national rate for civilians;

- Military divorce rates are higher than the national average;
- The new veterans are less than 1 percent of the American population; as a result, returning troops often feel isolated in their own communities.

Camp San Luis Obispo and Camp Roberts are two California National Guard camps in San Luis Obispo County. Troops from this region of California are deployed and deactivated here.

The statewide Operation Welcome Home coordinates services for returning troops ([www.veterans.ca.gov](http://www.veterans.ca.gov)) and is supported in part by the VetFund Foundation ([www.vetfund1.com](http://www.vetfund1.com)).

The Coming Home Project offers holistic services to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families ([www.cominghomeproject.net](http://www.cominghomeproject.net)).

Hotline is a confidential local suicide prevention and mental health crisis phone line available to all people. Supporting Hotline will keep this resource available to local veterans ([www.t-mha.org](http://www.t-mha.org)).

Because the most recent Homeless Enumeration Study found veterans who are homeless, supporting one of the services programs, such as Prado Day Center, Maxine Lewis Homeless Shelter, and North County Homeless Shelter, will benefit veterans in need.

The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans, among other organizations, provide essential support to returning veterans.

Your support of key nonprofits will help keep services available.

*Barry VanderKelen is Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation.*

### Resource Use

- Support nonprofit leadership
- Board development/training
- Strategic planning

### Nonprofit Business Column of *The Tribune*

Barry VanderKelen, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation writes a bi-weekly column to help strengthen nonprofit organizations in the community.

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Each column is reprinted as a one-page handout for use by local organizations. Barry can be reached at 543-2323 or by e-mail at [barry@slocf.org](mailto:barry@slocf.org).