



Contact: James McManus 914-432-2287
jmcmanus@saluteheroes.org

COALITION HELPS LAUNCH JULY 4TH CELEBRATION AT LONG BEACH VA
Inaugural Event Builds Bridge to Homeless Vets

LONG BEACH, California -- July 8, 2012 -- Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (CSAH) field representative Jim Kokas was a key contributor to the success of the first annual Veterans' Independence Day Celebration held at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Long Beach (CA) Medical Center last week.

The Fourth of July celebration, which was open to area veterans and their families, hospital staff and the Long Beach community, featured an outdoor multi-cultural food festival, live music, presentations, fun, games and lots of patriotic spirit.

Master of ceremony, Rex Jennings, Chief of Voluntary Services at the VA's Long Beach Medical Center, said that the primary objective of the event was to "build a bridge" beyond the local neighborhood to all the veterans in the region, especially to the growing number of homeless veterans.

The population of homeless veterans in and around Orange County is said to be the largest in the country, with estimates ranging from 10-20,000, earning Los Angeles the dubious distinction of being the "homeless veteran capital of the world."

Despite "limited resources, and a small staff that always has too much to do," Jennings stated the event was "more successful than anyone could have imagined."

He said Kokas was among those who helped muster about 200 other volunteers needed to manage various tasks and responsibilities of the event, adding that a large proportion of the approximately 1,750- 2,000 in attendance during the course of the day were veterans.

"We've been trying to do this for years, but it only came together a few weeks ago," Jennings said. "Thankfully, we have people like Kokas and groups like the Coalition that are willing to volunteer their time and donate resources. Whenever we need something done like this, you guys make it happen."

He said he hoped the Independence Day Celebration would eventually join Memorial Day and Veterans Day as the third signature event for veterans in southern California sponsored by the Long Beach Medical Center.



Contact: James McManus 914-432-2287
jmcmanus@saluteheroes.org

About the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes

The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (CSAH) is dedicated to providing severely wounded veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom with the financial assistance and support they need to rebuild their lives and restore their hopes for achieving their greatest potential.

CSAH is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, non-partisan organization, founded in 2004 and headquartered in Wilton, Connecticut. All funds raised by CSAH to support its mission come from contributions made by individual citizens, corporate donors and foundations. Eligibility for CSAH's programs and services for injured veterans requires a disability rating of 30% or greater from either the U.S. Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs.

Since its founding, CSAH has provided emergency financial assistance and other services for thousands of severely wounded troops and their families, including more than 27,000 separate emergency aid payments, grants and holiday gift checks. More information is available at www.saluteheroes.org.

###