

Stand down—to relax or cause to relax after a state of readiness, commonly used by the military

My name is Ashley. Currently I am a student at Concord University and I recently heard a story in one of my Sociology classes.

The story went like this: "Working in the VA means that we can't ask for help even when it is needed the most. Twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring we have what we call a 'Stand Down' day. On this day we would give surplus military supplies to veterans trying to target homeless veterans especially. We got these surplus military items from a depo warehouse in New Jersey. Unfortunately, this warehouse recently burned down. Our Spring Stand Down day is coming up the end of May and with the warehouse burning down we have nothing to give to these veterans."

My professor, Lori Pace, told us this story in class. In our Sociology classes, we were already doing a collection for the homeless veterans in our community of blankets, hygiene items, hand-warmers. I don't know why but this really got to me. Realistically we knew that a group of college students wouldn't be able to replace everything that was lost in the warehouse. But I went home that night after class and couldn't sleep. My mind kept wondering and thinking about something that I could do to help. So I created a "Go Fund Me" account www.GoFundMe.com/StandDownDay. This was one of my solutions. I thought that maybe if I could get the word out about this that there might be others out there willing to help. Fortunately, an alternate military surplus source has been found that the VA Homeless Veteran Team in Beckley can access, but we still need your help to make sure this stand down has plenty for the homeless veterans.

Veterans who gave their all to the good fight often find themselves out of place in civilian life. This can lead to homelessness. The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) estimated in 2010 that on any given night there were 76,000 veterans sleeping on American streets. In southern West Virginia, the Veteran's Administration located in Beckley has a Homeless Team that supports at risk, homeless veterans with programs, outreach and even a ten bed shelter. Michael Anderson, a social worker on the Homeless Team for the VA, has been working with the Concord University students on the original collection and the needs for the spring Stand Down. The coolest part is that the May "Stand Down" is held in Rainelle and coincides with the Memorial Day Vietnam Veteran's Run for the Wall that goes through Rainelle. This has become a community supported weekend of activities including the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall being on display, veterans visiting the local school, concerts and parades.

This year's Stand Down is called The Marshall 'Tink' Sanford Memorial Veterans Stand Down. It is being held on May 26th and 27th at the Rainelle Army Reserve Center in Rainelle, West Virginia, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. During the Stand Down, homeless veterans will be provided with a broad range of necessities including food, counseling, referral services, and, most importantly, camaraderie and companionship. Local businesses as well as community members are encouraged to join the Concord University Sociology students in donating items such as: duffel bags, book bags, suitcases, cots,

sleeping bags, jackets, clothes (especially socks/underwear/hats/gloves), shoes, toiletries, first aid kits, blankets, cookware, ponchos, toilet paper and wipes. These donations can be donated by calling (304) 255-2121 Ext. 4429. Or you can make direct monetary donations through the www.GoFundMe.com/StandDownDay

All homeless/nearly homeless veterans and their families are invited to attend the event or contact Michael Anderson, MSW, LCSW (304)255-2121 Ext. 4429 with the VA Medical Center, Beckley, WV.