

Southwest Montana Veteran's Home Update #106

By Mike Lawson

Greeting once again to you, the Veterans/Counties/Communities of SW MT., who are the chief organizers and supporters of the SW MT Veteran's Home.

This last weekend, ending with Memorial Day on Monday, was all about honoring our Veterans who have served throughout our history of being this wonderful country we call America. These Veterans have served, and some continue to serve to enable this country to remain free. Many of these freedoms we have are taken for granted by many in this country, who may not be aware that in many other countries these freedoms do not exist. Freedom is not free and our veterans who have given their lives for you and I, or have died after serving, is what this "Hallowed Day" is all about. "America's Freedom is not Free". All across Southwestern Montana, Veteran's groups performed ceremonies and placed flags on veteran graves in their various cemeteries. One of the most appreciated responses for the Veterans was in seeing the communities helping place veteran grave flags, participating in the Veteran ceremonies and seeing the many businesses give discounts to veterans on this special day. The bottom line is "Let us never forget that all veterans gave some and others who gave their lives, gave all." Our Congressional Delegation was represented at the Memorial Day Ceremony by Sen Jon Tester, representatives for Sen Steve Daines and Rep Matt Rosendale. Senator Jon Tester honored the veterans in a special way by "Blowing Taps". He said it was also a tribute to WWII Army Veteran Pete Gotland who blew Taps for us for many years and passed away this past year.

Moving on to some more good news. Our departing SWMVH Liaison Mark Gollinger was able to see the long awaited CMS Medicare/Medicaid Inspections take place, which passed with flying colors. The fire-safety portion was left to do at the time I wrote this. The question of what this means is important to us. Mark said the VA is ready to move forward with their inspections, so within the next couple of weeks the Operations Contractor Eduro wants to admit more Resident Veterans and bring the Occupancy numbers to 20 residents. This will then allow the VA to come in and do their inspections. Four empty rooms in Cottage #2 will be left, until that inspection is completed. It's exciting to know that Cottage #3 will be open for occupancy right after Cottage #2 is full. Finally, we're seeing our SW MT VET HOME taking care of our veterans on the waiting list who will be admitted!

Construction Updates:

Construction completed on Community Center, Maintenance Building, Cottages #1/#2/#3.

Cottage #4: The Tiles Guys finished the tile-laying throughout this Cottage and are moving to #5. The Floor-Layers have laid the linoleum in the in the Pantry/Kitchen areas which now enables the appliances for those areas to be installed. They continue laying linoleum in the resident rooms in the east wing. Not too much left in this cottage for them. Painters are doing touch-up painting, with the hope that the final inspections will have the punch-list touch-up painting be at a bare minimum. The T-Bar Medal Ceiling Framework is just about complete except for a portion in the North-Wing Corridor. Not too far from the Ceiling Tile being installed. A Plumber/Carpenter team installed the Spa Tub. The Carpenters have the FFE package in all the Resident Room Bathrooms and throughout the Cottage, winding down as being completed. They have the trim completed in both wings. Cabinet Masters out of Great Falls are installing the Resident Room Bathrooms Vanities this week, as well as installing the swinging doors going into the kitchen area half-walls. They are also delivering the Handrails/Picture Rails to the Carpenters for them to install. Electricians continue their trim-out of light fixtures/outlets/switches/etc. This Cottage is moving well into being completed, inspected, and after start-up inspection, being turned over to the state. As you know by now, the state will hand it over to the Operation Contractor Eduro who will staff it and start admitting resident veterans. The end of the tunnel light is getting brighter and brighter!

Cottage #5: Carpenters continue to install window jambs. The Plumbers are tying in their copper lines water lines into the VAV (Air-handlers) as well as running their gas lines. The Sheetrock Tapers are bringing/finishing the walls in the South wing and Central area of this Cottage to a Level #5 mud-finish. The Painters are in the process of spraying the primer paint on the ceilings and walls. They'll then spray color on the ceilings and roll-paint color on the walls. This Cottage is scheduled to be completed in July.

Landscapers: The grounds are really starting to have a more refined look to them, with the borders between what will be flower-beds, shrub/bark areas and where the sod lawns will be. This crew of guys work hard in putting their sprinkler main lines/laterals in, raking out the topsoil and the other labor involved.

Zemljak Excavating: Continues to bring portions of the site dirt-work to grade and other odds and ends of the dirt-work.

The Construction Office Trailer and Conex Boxes will be moved off the Vet Home construction site, this week. This area is between the Community Center and Cottage #5. This will allow the Becker Landscaping crew to landscape this area. Again, this constructing of our SW MT Vet Home is with-in a couple of months of being completed.

I want to finish this article with the inclusion of outgoing Liaison Mark Gollinger's comments concerning our SW MT VET Home.

"First off, I have to say "Bravo Zulu" to the staff of the Home. This is a nautical term for "You did an awesome job". During my last week, the staff endured the health portion of the extremely stressful survey process. The very professional surveyors looked at all their systems, observed processes, and interviewed the residents and staff. In the exit brief they gave us lots of great advice and in it they also let us know that they found "zero deficiencies" . From what I understand, that never happens. I cannot say I was surprised!! They have been working so hard, helped their teammates even when it wasn't their primary position, and genuinely care about the residents and their well-being. It's time for me to move on to new adventures with my buddy Rod at The Peak INC. The staff did not make it easy for me to go and there are no words that can express my thanks for their kindness and generosity. They truly went above and beyond with my send off. I am both humbled and deeply appreciative of all they did. The Eduro/SWVMH team is outstanding, and I know that they will provide the best quality care to our resident Veterans. Make sure you express your thanks when you see them. Thank you to the Markovich crew and all their sub-contractors for building our outstanding Veteran's Home. Thank you to the Harrington family for their generous donation and thank all the legislative representatives that fought for this home for so long. Thank you to the State of Montana, the SWMVH Foundation, and my Eduro friends at the Southwest Montana Veterans Home, for allowing me to be part of your success and to continue serving my fellow Veterans. "Fair Winds and Following Seas".

With this great statement from my friend and fellow veteran Mark Gollinger, I'll close until next time.