

Southwest Montana Veterans Home. Update #96

By Mike Lawson

Greetings 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.

We welcomed another Resident Veteran, who arrived in an ambulance, that came from Oregon. He was wheeled in on a hospital bed and was pretty emotional in being back home in Montana. The resident veterans being admitted are overwhelmingly thankful in having the privilege as a veteran, to finally be making this Veteran's Home, "Home". The welcome they receive before they even enter the Cottage where they'll live sets them up for the wonderful care the Eduro Staff will give them. Once we receive word when a Veteran will be admitted, the staff/veterans/auxiliary/friends line the sidewalks and clap their hands as each of these resident veterans enter their new home. They each receive a gift before they enter the Cottage Entrance Doors. Each of the beds in their rooms will have a quilt on them, compliments of the many lady quilters across our state who have made them. The Eduro Staff treat them with dignity and respect and tell me they love taking care of our brother and sister veterans. It's truly a welcome home for these Vets to live their lives out in this beautiful place. They can truly call it home. We're hoping that in the not too distant future, when this Covid settles down and we have been vaccinated, that we can begin to do visitations. Our goal as a foundation is to create some activities that these resident veterans would really enjoy. All of us in Southwest Montana, who have struggled so hard to make this home a reality these last 12 plus years, are beyond joyful in seeing our veterans now being taken care of as they well deserve.

More and more is getting done on both the construction side and the staffing side. Two more Cottages will be on-line in the next week or so. The landscaping will be in full force once the ground thaws with the warmer weather we're starting to get. I was told that the frost went down 4 feet. I did do a walk-through of Cottages #2/#3/#4 and #5 and things are progressing well on all of them. Mike Ascherman and John Kotka continue to give me good updates and are pushing hard to bring our Vet Home to a completion in the next 2 or 3 months.

Construction Updates:

Community Building/Cottage #1 are completed and in use by the Operating Contractor Eduro. The exception was a change order on Cottage #1, that saw an extension of a sidewalk and a small section of fence installed on the outside of the west-wing end.

Cottage #2: The big story here is the final Architectural/Mechanical/Electrical/Painting punch-lists that were/are being worked on throughout this building. The Electrician/Plumbers/ Sheetmetal/Carpenters have completed their punch-list items, which leave only the painters to finish their punch-list. The Cleaners are in the process of doing the deep final cleaning and once they're done, this Cottage will get turned over to the state. The state will then give our Vet Home operator, Eduro, the go ahead to get the Staff for this Cottage hired, who will in turn get it stocked up with the supplies they'll need to operate it with.

Cottage #3: This Cottage is very similar as #2 in that the Architectural/Mechanical/Electrical/ Painting final punch-lists are being worked on. The Electricians/Plumbers/Sheetmetal/ Carpenters have this work done, which again leaves the painters to finish up their punch-list. The Cleaners have started doing a final deep cleaning in preparation for this cottage opening which will be the week after Cottage #2 is opened. Once the Resident Veterans are admitted in this Cottage, the count will be up to 36 Veterans total in our SW MT Vet Home.

Cottage #4: The main thrust of work in this Cottage is the Sheet-Rock Tapers and Painters. Their work is getting closer to being done. The Tile-Layers have the Resident room bathroom floors done in the East Wing and now have the floors to do in the North Wing. This will be followed with all the bathroom/shower walls being

tilled. It takes them about 7 weeks to tile a Cottage out. The Carpenters are following up with building window jambs (bucks) and doing the door trim-outs. Good months' worth of work left to do in this cottage.

Cottage #5: The Sheet-Rockers are working overtime in hanging sheetrock and having this cottage rocked out. The upper walls/ceiling are being fire-taped so that the seismograph ceiling T-Bar metal frame system can be installed starting this week. The Sheetmetal guys continue to work on the vast ductwork system that runs throughout this building. Johnson Controls was running the low-voltage thermostat wire to the resident rooms. The Plumbers were running the domestic water lines and the Electricians did a small bit of their rough-in work.

Maintenance/Receiving Building: The Painters completed the painting, as well as getting the floors cleaned and sealed. The Electricians have all the LED Lights installed and have the switches/outlets trimmed out. The Plumbers have piped out the copper and gas lines. The "Mop Sink" is installed with hot/cold water. The overhead ceiling gas heaters are installed, working and providing the building's heat. As of last Friday, this building was turned over to the state, who in turn turned it over to Eduro, who operates our Vet Home. Another step closer to completion. Hooray!!

Electrical Vault: It has been Fire-Taped out and the Electricians are ready to trim the lights/switches/outlets out.

Flagpole: The lighting system went through a change-order that switched from a solar lighting system to a hardwire lighting system. The solar lights were very inadequate in lighting up the flags at night. The new hardwire lighting is a big improvement. The Electricians/Carpenters/Zemljak Excavating did a great job in getting this done.

The Legislature news is a "wait and see situation" right now concerning our "Covered Walk-ways" between the Cottages. A lot of Federal stimulus money has come into Montana and part of it is earmarked for Veterans. Keeping our fingers crossed that some of it will be designated for not only the walkways, but possibly Cottage #6. We are also pursuing other possible funding methods in the way of Grants and possible donations given to the SW MT VET Foundation. The Foundation could then donate those monies for use in improving/funding/additions/etc., for our Vet Home. There's Legislation being introduced now that would allow the state to accept and be authorized to spend private money given by the Foundation, solely for our SW MT Veteran's Home.

Other Veteran happenings around our area starts with mentioning the Veteran's second shot of the Covid Vaccinations on the 25th of this week (Thursday). This is for the Veterans enrolled in the VA Health System, who got their first shot at the American Legion Hall on Wynn Ave in Butte last month. Another point of interest concerning our new VA Medical Center being built by the Harley Davison Dealership/Three Bears, is what the latest updated progress report is. I visited with Wayne Paffhausen, who is the Contractor/Owner of this new building. Once it is built, he will lease most of it to the VA for the new Medical Center. Wayne said they pushed all the snow off the Building Site to allow the sun to thaw the ground which had 4 ft of frost. The footing walls are already in with insulation board glued to them. The next step will be getting the electrical/water/sewer lines in and buried. Once this is done, the cement deck (floor) can be poured and the wall framing can begin. Wayne said the completion date will be in September or October. It will really be of great benefit to the Veteran's in Southwest Montana in terms of easy access and improved VA medical care.

That's all I have for now, so until next time, be safe and take care.