

## **Veterans Stand Down: Homeless receive services**

### **Event offers help, haircuts and hope**

[By LYNNETTE CURTIS](#)  
[REVIEW-JOURNAL](#)

Homeless veterans Daniel Diehl and Randy Dotter relaxed in the shade beneath a tree at the Fraternal Order of Eagles No. 1213 Wednesday morning, munching barbecued pork sandwiches and talking about their futures. "I'm taking Randy to Reno when I get my Social Security check next month," said the U.S. Navy veteran of the Vietnam War. "I got family there, so he won't have to take the first \$5-an-hour job that comes along."

Diehl, it turned out, had a plan to get himself and his buddy off the street.

"There are some here who want to stay homeless," Dotter, a U.S. Army veteran, said, gesturing towards dozens of other homeless men gathered nearby. "We want to get off the street."

The two friends had walked from downtown Las Vegas to the first day of U.S. Vets' annual Veterans Stand Down, an event that brings together local social service providers in an effort to help homeless veterans get off the street.

The two men wanted to pick up some free food and clothes and visit with fellow former military members.

"Some of us served on the same field," Diehl said. "There's a lot of camaraderie here."

They will have even more time to reminisce at this year's Stand Down. Organizers have extended it to three days so they can better serve the homeless veterans.

"Other U.S. Vets sites (in other cities) have three-day events, and they are able to do more," said Pauline Gaumond, community outreach director for the nonprofit agency that provides housing and services to homeless and disabled veterans.

A extended event gives volunteers time to research legal issues and try to locate housing for veterans, she said.

But Wednesday morning's favorite amenity was the free showers, Dotter said. For the first time, the event featured a mobile shower unit.

Attendees also could get a free haircut, pick out donated clothes, and get free dental and eye exams.

Dotter, who sometimes works as a day laborer and sleeps "wherever the cops don't bother me," had picked up a duffel bag full of new clothes and a new blanket.

"This is all that I have," he said. "I lost everything I owned. That's what gets me -- homeless stealing from homeless."

"A lot of them will still be on the street a year from now," Diehl said. "But we are going to be just fine."

Gaumond said she expects several hundred homeless veterans to attend the Stand Down.

The Veterans Stand Down Committee in Las Vegas includes members of about 20 nonprofit agencies, local government and business representatives and volunteers from AmeriCorps and Nellis Air Force Base.

The Stand Down runs from 7 a.m. to about 10 p.m. today and Friday at 1601 E. Washington Ave., near Bruce Street.

For more information, call 429-7294 or visit the U.S. Vets Web site, [www.usvetsinc.org](http://www.usvetsinc.org)

Evaluating our progress (nothing now)

Fundraising and Allocations (Michele to help work on)