



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
GEORGE P. BUSH, COMMISSIONER

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PRESS RELEASE

Bonham Veterans Home residents to participate in healing collaboration with Ranch Hand Rescue

First-time collaboration for Texas Veterans Land Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 01, 2017

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AUSTIN - Today Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush announced that the General Land Office's Veterans Land Board (VLB) is collaborating with Ranch Hand Rescue (RHR) Counseling Center and Animal Sanctuary to offer animal therapy for residents of the Clyde W. Coper Texas State Veterans Home with Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). The collaboration will offer groups of five veterans with an opportunity to travel from the Clyde W. Coper Texas State Veterans Home in Bonham to the RHR facility in Argyle, Texas. During the eight-week course, the veterans will work with the rescued animals and trauma counselors to address PTS symptoms relating to survivors' guilt, moral injury, intrusive memories and end of life issues.

"Post-traumatic stress is a very real and serious issue that many of my fellow veterans face every day," said Commissioner Bush. "Like other wounds of war, PTS is an injury - one that can be treated, allowing those who suffer to return to their lives. These invisible wounds often remain hidden, or unspoken, for years. At the VLB, we work every day to help veterans find the help they need and know that they aren't alone. We are so proud of this wonderful collaboration with Ranch Hand Rescue and looking forward to offering healing and recovery for some of our veterans who have dealt with PTS for decades."



Local veteran interacts with injured donkey. Photo credit: Ranch Hand Rescue

Ranch Hands Rescue is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit with two facilities in Argyle and Denton, Texas, specializing in treatment of severe traumas that do not respond to traditional therapies. Through its Animal Sanctuary, RHR rescues animals that have experienced the worst abuses and neglect that no one will take and most thought should be euthanized. RHR rebuilds the human bond, and then gives them a purpose through its Counseling program. RHR utilizes animal assisted therapy to allow severely traumatized children, battered women, veterans and others with mental health issues heal where other therapies failed. The counselors use trauma informed care methods such as cognitive behavioral therapy along with cutting-edge equine & animal assisted therapy to help improve the lives of individuals of all ages.

"Our team is honored to collaborate with the Veterans Land Board to assist the residents of the Bonham Vet Home," said Bob Williams, founder of Ranch Hand Rescue Counseling Center & Animal Sanctuary. "Our mental health professionals specialize in providing trauma informed counseling and stand ready to provide support and therapy with mental health care and healing to these amazing veterans. As we like to say at the ranch, it's animals helping people and people helping animals."

As Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, Bush also serves as chairman of the Veterans Land Board (VLB), a division of the Texas General Land Office, which operates eight Texas State Veterans Homes conveniently located across the state. These homes providing affordable, long-term nursing care for Texas Veterans, their spouses and Gold Star parents. Because the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs subsidizes much of a veteran's cost to stay at a VLB Texas State Veterans Home, daily out-of-pocket rates are well below average and include the cost of medications for veterans. In addition to Texas State Veterans Homes, the VLB division of the GLO offers Texas State Veterans Cemeteries to honor those who have served and access to land, home and home improvement loans that allow them to purchase their very own piece of Texas. Like all VLB programs, the Texas State Veterans Homes are self-supporting and cost Texas taxpayers virtually nothing.

In 2016, Commissioner Bush visited cities and towns across Texas to raise awareness within the veteran community about the benefits and services available to them as part of the "Year of the Veteran" initiative. Commissioner Bush is currently the only veteran non-judicial statewide elected official in Texas. He served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan as an officer in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

Having seen the devastating effect of post-traumatic stress on our veterans, Commissioner Bush initiated a first of its kind program in all eight of the Texas State Veterans Homes to better identify and treat PTS, ensuring that Texas will be serving the next generation of men and women who have fought for this country. Commissioner Bush believes prioritizing veterans services and outreach will help Texas continue to be the best state in the nation not just for current veterans, but also for the next generation of soldier, sailor, airman and marine.

For more information on the benefits fair or the Texas Veterans Land Board call 1-800-252-VETS (8387) or visit TexasVeterans.com. You can also follow the VLB on Facebook at Facebook.com/TXVLB, or Twitter Twitter.com/TexasVLB, or YouTube Youtube.com/TexasVLB, or Instagram Instagram.com/TexasVeterans/, or the Texas Veterans Blog at TexasVeteransBlog.com/.

For more information on Ranch Hands Rescue, please visit RanchHandRescue.org or contact Bob Williams at 940-464-0985 or 817-907-5625. A video link about Ranch Hands Rescue explaining the organization's mission and work is available at <https://youtu.be/gKhAuEZyZXA>.

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