



AVAG News

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AVAG wishes to express its appreciation to Home Depot and Staples –stores, staff and volunteers– for their generous and consistent support of our veterans.



Trina Raya and Jose Fernandez of the Team Home Depot store in Rialto display the Certificate of Appreciation presented to the store, staff and volunteers who participated in two, major manufactured home renovations for veterans in the AVAG program. The store also donated more than \$6,000 in supplies and materials for the project. Photo courtesy of Paul Buron



Above left, Home Depot of Rialto staff take a short break from a lengthy project in an AVAG veteran's manufactured home, which included rebuilding the bathroom floor (crew at work at right). From left, the hard-working Home Depot crew members are, Jose Fernandez, Paulina Villasenez, Breanna Jimenez and Trina Raya. Photo courtesy of Doreen Matsumoto

Home Depot Team Helped Woman Veteran

For the second time in recent months a large team of skilled and trained staff and volunteers from the Home Depot Rialto store, joined some American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) veterans, to help a veteran's family by providing hundreds of hours of free labor, carpentry skills and thousands of dollars of supplies in rebuilding flooring and bathroom in her mobile home.

Earlier this year, the huge project began on the mobile home of Navy veteran and widower Wilma Henning in the Glen Aire Mobile Estates community in San Bernardino on South Rancho Road with little fanfare, as AVAG and Home Depot volunteers and supervisors began the task of pulling up old carpet, ripping out old, rotten floors and supports before the project turned to the restoration phase of rebuilding the floors and bathroom.

"You know, in some circles within our country, some large corporations like Home Depot get painted unfairly with a negative political brush," said AVAG Director and Vietnam veteran Mike Keele. "But, I have to tell you, Home Depot has stood by our veterans, working in hot weather and sometimes on rainy days. You'll only hear me sing the praises of Home Depot in Rialto in particular, because the staff and volunteers both genuinely care about veterans. They're always courteous, even under the worse conditions on the hottest day. I never heard them complain once. They earned our respect and admiration for a job well done."

Wilma Henning added, "Due to my health and unplanned fiscal exigencies, some of our floors had deteriorated into potentially hazardous conditions. Home Depot volunteers

and staff, performed miracles on those floors. I couldn't thank them enough for their work, and for our AVAG veterans....thank you."

The first joint project between Home Depot staff/volunteers and AVAG veterans rebuilt flooring problems and a kitchen countertop

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Home Depot performs miracles on a Navy Veteran's home

Chaplain's Corner

Images from activities at AVAG Southern California Communities by AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto

Chaplain's Corner

Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto

Santiago Creekside Estates and Santiago Creek Orange Estates



Santiago Creek Orange Estates veteran Joseph Magrante, right, stands with Robinson Castillo who's team replaced carpeting in three of his rooms recently. Robinson Castillo's staff has also assisted other veterans in the Creek Orange Estates in recent weeks.



Chase Wickersham, standing to the left of the flag, a long time participant of the Orange County Veterans Military Families Collaborative, joined the April AVAG in Orange and shared valuable information for our veterans.

Santiago Palm Vista



AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto presents an AVAG T-shirt to Santiago Palm Vista Manager Dawn Moore at one of the first AVAG meetings held in the Hemet community. Photo courtesy of Paul Buron



Matsumoto stands with another veteran at the AVAG event.



Veterans from the Santiago Palm Vista community gathered for food, fun and games in the renovated Community Clubhouse that now has a new big HD TV, new furniture and a working fire place, to go along with the outdoor pool and patio furniture.



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AVAG News

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Diamond Bar Estates



The AVAG Diamond Bar Chapter Meeting in April celebrated the birthday of Korean War Army veteran Robert Dunbar, seated, after a vigorous round of games, pizza, birthday cookies and coffee.



Members of the AVAG Bible study group gathered a group photo after discussing forgiveness and the love of Jesus for mankind.



Winners of gift cards were Ruben and Chris Garcia, left and Cindy and Conrad Barrera, right.

Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park



Everyone was all smiles after the March Sequoia meeting.



AVAG Director and Vietnam Veteran Mike Keele is intently enjoying the night's dice game at Sequoia in March.



From left, Sequoia dice game winner David Rosales, right, is all smiles after winning the one of two gift cards presented to winners that night.

Marine Corps veteran and Sequoia AVAG Team member David Rosales is one of the first veterans featured in AVAG's "Meet A Veteran" poster, a new effort that will be followed up in other AVAG communities to recognize our veterans for their service to our country.

Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park



AVAG Sequoia said goodbye to Elizabeth who passed away in March. The above photo was taken in 1998 when she was named Employee of the Year at a local hospital. Elizabeth, who came to every AVAG meeting with her Navy Veteran husband Mike Goens, will be greatly missed.



From left: David Rosales, a Marine Corps veteran, Chris Barrajas and Evelyn Coria, all employees at the Staples, Inc. store in Rialto, display the plaque and Certificate of Appreciation presented to them in gratitude for the many generous donations they have provided to veterans in the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park recently. During the Christmas holidays, AVAG staff were collecting back packs for children of veterans and community families. When AVAG staff and volunteers approached Staples Inc. in Rialto, staff responded generously with several thousand dollars in donations for children, including school supplies of all sorts, notebooks, pens, pencils, Crayons, markers, etc. AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto said, "The Staples store in Rialto responded to our holiday needs with remarkable generosity and kindness for our children. The staff was exceeding kind."



Navy veteran and longtime AVAG handyman Mike Goens stands next to the casket of his wife Elizabeth, during her celebration of life conducted at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside County on March 5.

Home Depot Team Helped Woman Veteran continued

for AVAG member/widow Roberta Gardner in the fall in the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park in San Bernardino. Her home repairs were completed before Christmas after more than two dozen volunteers worked diligently on that project for more than two weeks.

And, these Herculean projects were all launched after Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park AVAG Team Leader Jeff Scism, an Air Force veteran, went to Rialto Home Depot Store Manager David Yniguez reporting the extreme needs of the two widows.

Yniguez didn't delay. He quickly responded because, "We knew (AVAG Team Leader) Jeff (Scism) and were learning about that (AVAG) program" when he mentioned the widows' mobile home repair needs.

Yniguez assessed what needed to be done, in terms of materials and labor and turned to Home Depot's Team Depot Program, run under the aegis of the Home Depot Foundation, which provided \$4,500 in materials for the Gardner project. Once the funding was approved, Yniguez turned to Maria Castro, the operations manager in the busy Rialto store, who went to work lining up Home Depot volunteers to work with the skilled carpenters on staff in that store.

Yniguez performed a second, precise assessment at the Henning home, put together a work order, obtained another grant to fund the materials used to repair her Glen Aire mobile home before turning to Maria Castor, "who did another marvelous job," Keele said. "They're amazing people. Ms. Castor gets things done, no matter how severe the odds are against her....

"Our veterans will forever be in debt to Home Depot, Mr. Yniguez, Ms. Castor, Home Depot's Team Depot Program, and the skilled staff and marvelous volunteers that she organized.... Hats off to all of them, and may God continue to bless them, their skills and their kindness." 🙏