

Inspiring Ideas

Overcoming The Odds To Create A New Life

(NAPSA)—Veteran William “Bill” McGee, a well-known retired radio and TV broadcaster in the San Francisco area, felt pretty hopeless when faced with the misfortune of going blind. Fortunately, he had a helpful resource to turn to.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Blind Rehabilitation Service gave him a new life that inspired him, with the help of his wife, Sandra, to write a book about it. Created with her assistance, the book describes what VA blind rehab can do for veterans, both those who lose their sight as a result of combat operations as well as due to age-related factors such as macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy.

His book, “Learning to Cope with Sight Loss: Six Weeks at a VA Blind Rehabilitation Center,” recounts McGee’s loss of sight and his subsequent day-to-day experience at the VA Western Blind Rehabilitation Center (WBRC) in Palo Alto, California.

“This is the best-written description of VA’s blind rehabilitation program that I’ve seen and an invaluable tool for veterans considering participation in one of the regional centers,” said Patrick J. Caskey, M.D., North Bay Vitreoretinal Consultants.

It outlines how the center works and what is taught there, training that includes Visual Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Living Skills, Manual Skills, Computer Access Program, Recreation Therapy, and Family Training.

The publication, also available online and on audio CD, explains how such instruction and training improved McGee’s coping skills. McGee hopes to inspire others.



A rehab program offers veterans the skills to cope with blindness and invaluable tools for improving their lives.

“If my booklet or audio CD inspires a fellow veteran to ‘get up off the couch’ and seek help, then my objective will have been accomplished,” said McGee.

These VA programs for the blind, visually impaired, and those with low vision exist thanks to the advocacy work of the Blinded Veterans Association.

Chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1958, BVA links veterans with the services they’ve earned. Membership is open to all legally blind veterans who have served in the U.S. military. Membership is not required for veterans to receive assistance, which is always free. For more information, call BVA at (800) 669-7079 or visit the association’s Web site at www.bva.org.

For more information about the publication, visit www.bmcpublishings.com/sightloss.html or contact Christina Hitchcock at BVA National Headquarters, 202-371-8880, Ext. 3303, or at chitchcock@bva.org.