

# East Bay Stand Down to help displaced vets

[Erin Clark](#) Jul 22, 2016 [Featured](#), [News](#), [Region](#) [Leave a comment](#)



Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1351 stands outside the VFW building at 930 Ward St., Martinez, to gift a \$1,000 check to East Bay Stand Down, a four-day event that helps displaced, homeless and needy veterans and their families. Post 1351's Adjutant, Carl Edwards (second from left), presents the check to the Stand Down's director, Jerry Yahiro (far left). (E. CLARK / Martinez Tribune)

**By E. CLARK**  
*Martinez Tribune*

Veterans of Foreign Wars know that nothing develops camaraderie better than serving alongside fellow men and women in times of war. For countless members of the VFW, including members of local Post 1351, that fellowship lasts long after their active service in the Armed Forces is over.

That's why Post 1351 of Martinez is continuing their tradition of helping veterans in need, most recently by volunteering and making a monetary contribution of \$1,000 to the East Bay Stand Down, an event to help displaced, homeless and needy veterans throughout the Bay Area.

Director of the Stand Down, veteran Jerry Yahiro, visited the Martinez VFW Saturday, July 16, to talk about the upcoming event and accept the \$1,000 donation.

“Many veterans, after they get out of the service, attempt to put in for their VA (Veterans Affairs) benefits but encounter the bureaucracy that exists within the system,” Yahiro told veterans gathered at the Martinez Post.

He said the average waiting time for veterans benefits to be approved is nine months, but that he personally knows of one application that has been pending for eight years. It’s wait times like these that can make it difficult for veterans to get back on their feet, especially if they face Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other disabilities that make transitioning away from active service more difficult.

The purpose of East Bay Stand Down is to bring together community members and service providers to help those veterans regain a high level of independence.

This year, Alameda County Fairgrounds has donated space to host the Stand Down, which will connect up to 500 veterans with services ranging from VA health care, dental, mental health services, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing, court services and legal aide. During the Stand Down, participating veterans will receive free meals, new clothing, showers and haircuts, and even a chance to restore their driver licenses and IDs, among a myriad of other services.

Yahiro said buses will be available to transport veterans to and from the event, with participants staying at the encampment during its entirety, Sept. 15-18. Sign-up sheets will be distributed throughout nine counties, including Contra Costa, at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and other places those in need might congregate. He said registration will likely not begin until a few weeks before the Stand Down, “because when you’re homeless, you may not know where you’re going to be in two weeks.”

Such a highly coordinated, effective event isn’t cheap, nor is it easy, Yahiro said.

The Stand Down is seeking volunteers, and is particularly in need of those that can help with the very physical aspects of setting up the tent encampment and taking it down. Volunteers must be at least 13 years of age, with anyone 16 or younger under constant supervision by a responsible adult. Set-up will begin Monday, Sept. 12, with take-down finishing up the following Wednesday, Sept. 21.

Yahiro said while most of the meals provided at the Stand Down are courtesy of organizations like Rotary and the Mormon church, and medical and dental services are largely provided by the VA or donated by professionals, expenditures for the event could total upwards of \$120,000, making monetary donations vital to the event’s success. All donations are tax deductible and go directly toward helping the veterans – no salaries are paid with donated funds, Yahiro said.

Tent sponsorships start at \$500 each, with the benefactors able to display a banner at the top of their tents, however, any amount is appreciated, Yahiro said.

This year, VFW Post 1351 will have two tents at the event, as well as a host of volunteers helping throughout the 10-day process. They are able to support the Stand Down through funds raised during Buddy Poppy distribution days. The poppy serves as the VFW’s official memorial flower, with the organization distributing Buddy Poppies since 1922. The idea stemmed from John McCrae’s famous poem, “In Flanders Fields,” with the poppies representing the blood shed by American service members.

Post 1351 will resume poppy distribution in November, in the weeks leading up to Veterans Day, Nov. 11. They’ll be outside Walmart and Safeway. All proceeds go toward helping veterans in need.

To donate to the East Bay Stand Down, visit [www.eastbaystanddown.org](http://www.eastbaystanddown.org), or write checks payable to Diablo Valley Veterans Foundation, EBSD, P.O. Box 2133, Danville, CA 94526 (IRS ID 26-3198472).

For more information about Martinez VFW Post 1351, visit [www.vfwpost1351.org](http://www.vfwpost1351.org).

