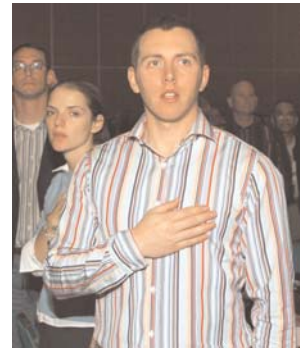


National Symposium for the Needs of Young Veterans

"Throughout our relationship with DCI we've been provided with thoughtful and strategic advice, creative ideas and outstanding execution. The symposium, a landmark event for AMVETS, is no exception. Thanks to our success we've now launched Phase II. You can bet DCI will continue to be right there with us as we implement the powerful recommendations for reforming the veterans benefits system that came from the symposium."

*-- Velma Hart,
AMVETS National Finance Director*



Young Veterans attending Symposium

The Challenge:

One of the greatest and yet largely unrecognized challenges facing America is how the country will provide for the needs of future veterans -- especially those younger people who are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world today. AMVETS, one of the nation's leading veterans organizations, has long advocated for mandatory funding to ensure that appropriate support is provided for the veterans benefits system.

Strategy:

While there have been several commissions that have studied the veterans benefits system, none had actively sought out the opinions of those most affected by the system -- veterans themselves. AMVETS believed that by soliciting and showcasing the ideas of veterans, they could raise awareness of the benefits system in a new and more compelling way.



Former Army Sergeant First Class Dana Bowman, Former Army Specialist Shoshana Johnson and Former Marine Sergeant James Wright participating in the Symposium

AMVETS turned to Devillier Communications, Inc. (DCI), which recommended the creation of The National Symposium for the Needs of Young Veterans.

Tactics:

Over an 18-month period, DCI, in close collaboration with AMVETS, helped develop the symposium and promote it to selected target audiences. Tactics included:

- Identification and recruitment of speakers including Ret. U.S. Army General Tommy Franks; Major Tammy Duckworth, a helicopter pilot shot down in Iraq; and several young veterans recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Organization of 25 workgroups that focused on improving and modernizing health care, employment and the claims processing system, and addressing homelessness among veterans.
- Creation of a media partnership with Military.com to attract veterans and active duty military as participants.
- Development of a Web site; management of an online, print and radio ad campaign; production of an online newsletter; and creation of brochures and flyers to be used by AMVETS to recruit participants.
- Launch of an aggressive media relations program leading up to and during the symposium.
- Promotion of the symposium recommendations report, "Voices for Action: A National Focus on the Changing Needs of Veterans," at a National Press Club briefing November 9.



Results:

The symposium, which took place in Chicago in October 2006, attracted approximately 500 veterans; active duty military; family members; government, business and educational leaders; and others concerned about veterans issues.

Among some of the 120 recommendations made by symposium workgroups were increasing the use of technology to streamline processing benefits claims, developing creative ways to bring veterans health care services to rural areas, such as mobile clinics, and enforcing and standardizing employment preference laws.

Through DCI's efforts, more than 2,500 stories about the symposium and the symposium report appeared. At least 91 million people saw, read or heard about the symposium or the final report.

Several national and international news organizations attended all or portions of the symposium. Among these were *The New York Times*; *The Washington Post*; the *Los Angeles Times*; the *Chicago Tribune*; the *Chicago Sun Times*; German Radio Network; Le Monde; France Radio Network; the "CBS Evening News"; WGN-TV; CNN; and WTTW-TV, the Chicago PBS station. *Military Times* filed four stories from the symposium.

The National Press Club briefing attracted 18 reporters including Gannet News Service, Medill News Service, ABC-TV, Cox -TV, and Federal News Service, among others. In addition, symposium spokespersons appeared on NPR's "The Diane Rehm Show" and XM Satellite's "The Bob Edwards Show" and "The Judith Warner Show." *The New York Times* Sunday Magazine interviewed an AMVETS spokesperson and a symposium workgroup facilitator for an impending article. As a direct result of the symposium, *Newsweek* is producing a cover story in February on the shortcomings in the veterans benefits system.



Shoshana Johnson, first African-American woman prisoner-of-war



(l-r) AMVETS National Commander Tom McGriff, various media and Past national commander William Boettcher, all at the AMVETS National Press Club briefing in November 2006.



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