

# Statement of Interest – Veterans Issues Advisory Committee

Name: Walan Chang

Military Service: 1984 – 2007, U.S. Air Force

Family Military Service: U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps

As a military member who has resided in the Monterey area multiple times since the late 1980s, I deeply support VIAC's mission to improve the lives of Monterey's veterans, especially disabled, homeless, minority, and other traditionally disadvantaged groups of veterans. After retiring, I returned to the area more than a decade ago, and my husband and I own a home in Marina. I am active in the local veterans, scuba diving, and animal rescue communities, and recently completed my Master of Applied Marine and Watershed Science degree at CSUMB. I would like to serve as the Veterans Family Representative on the VIAC.

Since retiring and returning to Monterey, I have been volunteering for a number of veteran's groups associated with the VA. I'm the current Co-Chairperson of the VA Palo Alto Veterans and Family Advisory Council (VFAC), which serves as a forum to include veteran and family preferences into improvement efforts, clinical care delivery, and policy creation for the Palo Alto Health Care System including all the Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). I am also the Veteran Representative on the Women Veterans Health Committee, Research Engagement Council, Patient Experience Committee, and Diabetes Committee. I work to improve veteran care as a role player during New Nurse Simulation Training, ensure the senior leadership and managers see veterans as individuals by speaking about my military and medical care experiences during the annual Senior Leadership Retreat Veteran Panels, and have a voice in the staff composition as the veteran representative on hiring interview panels. In the local community, I have promoted veteran interests as speaker or panel member at special events such as the Veterans Welcome Home Training at Monterey Peninsula College and Process Improvement Workshops at the Monterey CBOC, supported our homeless veterans as a volunteer for local Stand Down events, worked at Heroes' Open Tournaments for the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery, made veteran students more visible as part of the CSUMB Student Veterans Organization, and served as a veteran board member of the Spreckels Memorial District since 2019. Most recently, I have volunteered at all the COVID vaccine clinics at the Monterey CBOC.

In addition to my personal knowledge of challenges that family members of veterans face, my work with VFAC has given me great insight to the issues affecting family members of veterans from a variety of backgrounds and situations. While this has exposed me to many concerns of family members of older veterans, interacting with my stepson's veteran friends has greatly increased my understanding of the issues family members of younger veterans often face. Our veteran population is very diverse, which makes their concerns very diverse as well. It is important to look at any situation from a variety of perspectives before articulating a viewpoint or suggestion to ensure this very diverse group is properly represented.

Because a significant portion of my current veteran-oriented volunteer work is associated with the VA, I believe joining the VIAC would give me the opportunity to further expand my ability to positively affect veterans' quality of life by advocating for other veteran concerns including political support and representation, affordable housing, burials and cremations, increasing veteran visibility, and many other issues. I am fortunate enough to have a wonderful family, secure housing, and stable daily living conditions. I hope to join VIAC and increase the number of veterans who can say the same!