

## VALOR HOSTS FIRST COMMUNITY RE-INTEGRATION EVENT By Anh Tran, LCSW, Mental Health Clinical Supervisor, VALOR



The Veterans and Loved Ones Recovery (VALOR) program hosted its first Community Re-Integration event on Tuesday, November 17, 2015, at Knott's Berry Farm\*. The purpose of these group activities is to create opportunities for veterans to be with other veterans, build meaningful, supportive relationships, and birth a sense of hope that can multiply during their recovery.

The weather was beautiful, sunny and bright. Traffic was clear with three vans full of veterans and staff. Spontaneous sing-alongs to Boyz II Men and other oldies erupted along the way in one van, while lists of the top 10 rappers were created in another. All these veterans had something in common: They were once homeless and now are housed for the first time in many years.

Veterans bonded with one another over their respective branches in the military and their roles (Military Occupational Status - MOS) during their time in service. Banter went back and forth between generations of veterans, hailing from the Vietnam era to OEF/OIF. They shared personal stories about where they grew up and how they ended up here in LA. Everyone was supportive, recognizing each other's challenges and accomplishments during the time they serviced.

The event was a success.

Many veterans expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to be with their loved ones and alongside other vets. For some veterans, this was their first time to visit Knott's. Several others had not visited any theme parks since their childhood. The day ended with so many questions: "When is the next event?" or "We should go to an auto show next!" One veteran, homeless for 30 years, exclaimed: "This is the best thing that's happened to me this month!" He was recently housed at The Six last month.

\*Knott's Berry Farm continues its tradition of honoring the brave men and women who have served in the U.S. military, both past and present, with free admission during its 26th annual Military Tribute Days from November 1, 2015 - December 20, 2015. The free admission offer applies to all U.S. veterans, retired and active military personnel and one guest.

