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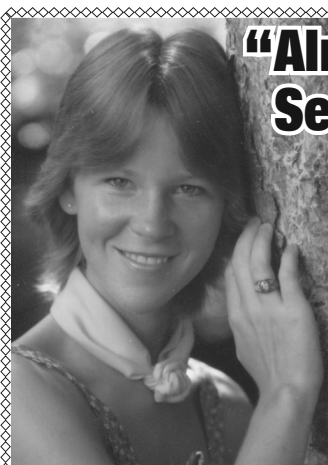
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 years at about \$50,000 a year, and the county never offered financial assistance, said O'Fallon Mayor Gary Graham.

"We never wanted the park closed or anything like that, we just wanted some sort of cost sharing," Graham said.

Maintaining the park was expensive because of the mowing and police protection, Graham said.

"After we turned it back to the county, they haven't really talked to us about it," Graham said. "We do want it for our residents, but it would be in the county's corner to see what they would want to do with it. If they want to talk to us, we'll certainly listen."

Contact reporter Jacqueline Lee at jlee@bnd.com or 239-2655.



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VETERANS | Billions allocated to help

Continued from Page A1

Q: What are the benefits of the VA's push to provide long-term, comprehensive residential treatment?

A: They are two-fold, Dougherty said.

"One is these are veterans who, if left untreated, would be heavy consumers of health care services," he said. "So getting them back to a position where they are

then eat breakfast cooked up by a resident who in an earlier life had worked as a restaurant chef.

Then everyone boards buses for St. Louis, where they spend most of the day in getting job training and medical care at the VA hospitals in downtown St. Louis and at Jefferson Barracks in South St. Louis County.

In the evenings back at the Joseph Center, the residents take part in more meetings, with about an hour of down time before bed to watch TV, read or hang out with friends.

Bobby Williams, 51, a former Marine, credited Watts' encouragement and motherly approach with helping him stay sober after decades fighting drugs and alcohol.

"She's always talking to us. And she tries to stay on us guys," Williams said. "She's a caring person. I like that."

Watts' caring attitude really pays off most in the mornings, when residents are feeling most uptight and worried about their futures, Demming said.

"She'll say, 'C'mon, take it easy. Just relax. And do the thing one day at a time,'" he said. Comprehensive care centers — which provide a safe, long-term home and a full spectrum of training and counseling opportunities — are increasingly becoming the standard for homeless veterans nationwide, said Bob Adams, the president and co-founder of the Midwest Shelter for Homeless Veterans, in Wheaton, a five-bed facility that opened in 2007.

"Maybe the most important thing is they come home to their own lives again. They get a chance to get their legs underneath them again," said Adams, a Vietnam veteran. "They get to feel a part of, instead of a part from."

Combat veterans are es-

pecially vulnerable to homelessness because of the emotional problems that come from post-traumatic stress disorder, a psychiatric condition resulting from life-threatening experiences. PTSD's symptoms include anxiety, depression, nightmares and flashbacks.

Veterans suffering from it often self-medicate with the help of drugs or alcohol, upping the likelihood they'll lose their jobs and homes, cut themselves off from their families and wind up in jail or on the streets.

Nationwide, an estimated 130,000 veterans are homeless at any given time, with twice that number estimated to be homeless during any given year, according to VA statistics.

The traditional problem of homeless veterans are being fed by new strains resulting from the multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan that military personnel have repeatedly endured, according to Adams.

"I went once. Once was enough," said Adams, who served in Vietnam in 1968 as a Navy corpsman with a Marine rifle platoon.

Because of the military's multiple deployment policy, "You never really come home completely because you know you have to go back. You never settle into family life," Adams said. "You feel different and distant ... And I think that wears on people psychologically."

Adams compared America's looming problem of homeless veterans to Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005.

"We know it's coming, but we just don't see it yet," he said. "But when it hits, it's going to be absolutely amazing."

Contact reporter Mike Fitzgerald at mfitzgerald@bnd.com or 239-2533.

AIRPORTS | Bird strikes

Continued from Page A1

geese were sporadic, but in the last five years the number has become a growing issue.

"We are at a point where we have to go out two or three times a week and use noise makers to try and scare the flock off and try to get them to find somewhere else to live," McDaniel said.

Other tactics used to deter birds involve chasing them away from the runway via vehicles equipped with foghorn-like machines and lights and creating habitats suitable for wildlife far away from runways.

"We try to make it a place that is not comfortable for them to live," McDaniel said.

Every airport also has a wildlife management team, as required by the FAA.

The St. Louis Regional Airport in Bethalto also has a wildlife management program in place to deter birds from the runway via cracker shells and creating habitats attractive to bird populations away from approach and departure areas, according to Airport Manager David Miller.

Cracker shell rounds are small firecracker type devices that are contained in a shotgun shell. When fired, they produce loud noises that scare off wildlife.

Lea said habitat modification is a "key tool" to managing wildlife at Lambert and includes eliminating vegetation, sources of water and frequently mowing the grass to keep out wildlife.

Despite attempts to keep collision rates down, damage is still done to aircraft that encounter birds.

McDaniel said the extent of damage can range from sheet metal damage and a cracked windshield in a smaller plane, to substantial skin and engine damage in larger jets.

"The real hazard is the ingestion of a bird in the engine," McDaniel said. "Worst case is that the engine will need to be shut down, or will shut down. All those (larger jets) have at least two engines, hopefully you only get birds in

one."

Out of the 670 reported incidents at all four airports, only one plane was listed as "destroyed," and was due to ingestion of birds.

In November 2003, a Learjet 24, which seats up to eight people, was recorded as having "ingested little black birds in both engines causing them to shut down." The plane then landed in a wheat field four miles away from the Downtown runway it took off from and caught fire, destroying the aircraft. The pilot and co-pilot had serious injuries and the four passengers had minor injuries, according to the FAA report.

Although most precautions against birds take place on the ground, bird-detecting radar is a possibility of the future.

Lea said this kind of radar is used, not to scare birds away, but to detect their presence. This type of radar is not used at Lambert, but has been in use at a Seattle airport since 2007.

Miller said radar is used at St. Louis Regional, but did not think it was of great use in detecting birds since they usually don't show up.

Miller said it is difficult to completely mitigate against bird strikes and the one that brought a US Airways jetliner down on the Hudson River in January 2009 brought more awareness to bird-plane collisions.

"Now that that has happened ... (the FAA) is focusing a lot of research to see if it could have been avoided," Miller said. "We are all interested in that research and how it turns out."

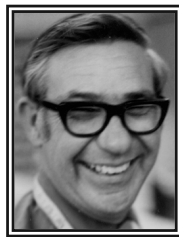
McDaniel said the emergency landing on the Hudson caused an increased reporting of incidents.

"What we are probably seeing now is not an increase in actual bird strikes, but reporting of those nondamaging strikes," McDaniel said.

Contact reporter Sydney Elliot at 239-2535.

Roger Ackermann

10/26/1921 - 2/1/2006



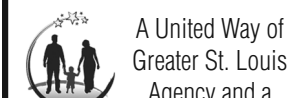
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