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Vietnam vets begin national conference in Greenville

NEWS STAFF

The Vietnam Veterans of America National Leadership Conference will get its biennial meeting under way today in Greenville, with an agenda that includes pressure on Congress to improve treatment of war veterans, a golf event fund raiser and recognition of war era radio host and "weather girl" Bobbie Keith.

About 400 people are expected to attend the conference at the Hyatt Regency downtown, according to organizers.

Dr. James Peake, sworn in as Secretary of Veterans Affairs last December, will deliver remarks at a lunch Friday, organizers said.

Peake graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1966 and served with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, where he was wounded. He went on to medical school at Cornell University and retired from the Army in 2004, having served as a cardiac surgeon and commander in several medical posts and Surgeon General of the Army from 2000-04.

On Saturday, Vietnam era Armed Forces Network radio host Chris Noel and Armed Forces TV weather personality Bobbie Keith will be honored. Also being honored on Saturday are former Marine W.D. Ehrhart, an award-winning poet and memoirist, and genome mapping pioneer Craig Venter, a Navy corpsman in Vietnam.

Poet and Vietnam veteran Bill Ehrhart also will be recognized during the conference.

Michelle DellaFave and Lindsay Bloom, who performed with the Dingalings on the old Dean Martin TV show, will also take part in the event, including singing at the opening.

The annual Mike Nash Memorial Scholarship Fund Golf Tournament will be Thursday, July 17, at the SummerSett Golf Club. The shotgun-start tournament begins at 2:00 p.m. Players may register any time up to then.

The cost per player is \$75, which includes green fees, a cart, a box lunch, and beverage. Sponsorships also are available at \$100 per hole. Since 1991, this program has provided financial assistance to dozens of Vietnam era veterans, dependent children, grandchildren, and orphans and widows of Vietnam veterans for undergraduate studies.
