



## Stephen J. Peck, MSW President and CEO

Stephen J. Peck, who served as a Marine officer in Vietnam, heads the nation's largest nonprofit devoted to providing housing and other essential services to at-risk veterans.

United States Veterans Initiative (U.S.VETS), which opened its first facility in Los Angeles in 1993, has grown to eleven locations in five states and the District of Columbia, housing more than 3,000 veterans a day. Annually, U.S.VETS helps more than 4,000 veterans find and retain their housing in the community and more than 1,200 veterans gain full-time jobs.

Peck says he learned in the Marine Corps, "If you don't go where the trouble is, you can't solve the problem."



As the U.S. continues its involvement in the longest war in its history, the issues of veteran unemployment, homelessness, Post-Traumatic Stress, and other reintegration issues have reached critical levels. Twenty veterans a day commit suicide in the United States.

"Our job at U.S.VETS is to engage the enemy at home -- the enemy of homelessness, disillusionment and disappointment -- to let these men and women know there is a path forward," says Peck. U.S.VETS strives to empower each veteran to take responsibility for his or her success, guiding them towards independence in the community, developing their workforce skills and supporting recovery.

Peck graduated from Northwestern University in 1968 and entered the Marine Corps that same year. In Vietnam, he was a first lieutenant in the 1st Marine Division, serving as a forward observer outside of Danang in 1969, receiving the Navy Commendation Medal.

After his service, Peck followed his father into the movie business, devoting his talents to documentary films. Eventually, a series of films on homelessness and veteran's issues compelled him to move from behind the camera to become a full-time advocate.

Peck went to work for the Veterans Administration placing homeless veterans into housing, and eventually joined the organization that became U.S.VETS as Director of Community Development in 1996. He was also the inaugural Director of U.S.VETS' largest site in Long Beach. He was appointed president and CEO in August 2010. Peck earned his Master's Degree in Social Work from USC in 1997. He is also the President of the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA) a consortium of six nonprofit veteran service providers working in partnership to address the needs of California's veterans.

He has been honored by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, the USC School of Social Work, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the City of Long Beach. He was awarded a Doctorate of Humane Letters, honoris causa, by the Chicago School of Professional Psychology in 2012.

Peck and his wife, Kristine Kidd, a food writer and culinary consultant, and the former Food Editor of *Bon Appetit* magazine, live with their Labrador retriever, Atticus, in the Los Angeles community of Topanga Canyon. He has a grown son, Ethan, an actor; and a grown step-daughter, Marisa, a writer.