

Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting

Minutes of January 11th, 2017

OPENING

The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:15 on Wednesday, January 11, 2017 in Mental Health Association by Larry Neumann. The meeting began with Larry welcoming in the New Year, highlighting the success of the Task Force in 2016 and providing a vision of opportunity through various initiatives, events and activities in 2017. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Introductions were made 'around the room' and the sign-in sheet was passed around.

PRESENT

Many veteran and human service agencies of Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Sullivan Counties were represented. Also in attendance were the guests/presenters; Liza Bove': Psychotherapist, John Tegeler: US Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney's Office, Leora Barish and Ryan O'Sullivan of Heroic Food, Jonathan Barnwell of Rockland Community College and David Lionheart of Play For Your Freedom. There were a total of 32 in attendance.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement was read and discussed. Comment made: Regarding collaboration and cooperation; based on past presenters who have used this forum as a podium for personal opinion and grandstanding, Larry discussed the need for the Task Force members to be tolerant and respectful to our guests and each other at all times.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Liza Bove' Trauma and Attachment Informed Psychotherapy – Liza introduced herself and described her background, coming from NYC to Orange County in 1988. Has worked in psychotherapy for past 20 years at public health clinics. Rural, urban and city experience. Has worked with a large variety of vets, ranging from homeless to active military. Insures everyone on her team is trauma informed. The work she does is considered alternative. Uses CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy). Also discussed EMDR when working with vets with serious clinical issues. EMDR through sensory reprogramming, allows memories to shift in the brain, lessening the effect of the trauma. Talked about breathing exercises, meditation, and mindfulness. More and more vets are utilizing these alternative (to psychotropic meds) therapies. Liza is putting together free clinics for vets in Orange and Ulster counties for that purpose.

David Lionheart: Play For Your Freedom – David is a 'stay at home' dad from Newburgh whos brother committed suicide. He developed Play For Your Freedom as a way for veterans at VA hospitals to get outdoor exercise. He holds Wellness Workshops, Real Helmets/Real Heros and the Annual Football Classic in which 35 vets came out to play. His program has a 100% return rate and 100% positive feedback rate. He encourages veteran peer-to-peer support while exercising. He has restored over 600 football helmets and given out over 400. The vets have pride in their helmets. He is always looking for donations of helmets to restore and a connection was made at the Task Force with Michele McKeon of RECAP. David's tag line; Wellness Workshops for the Mind, Body and Soldier.

John Tegeler: VA Transportation – John is a Veteran and Military Advocate from US Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney's office. He spoke regarding the recent changes to the VA's transportation policy, effective 1/30/17, specifically that the door-to-door shuttle and ride services will be discontinued. He urges the VA to not discontinue the service and do more research to look at needs and options. A Town Hall meeting is taking place on 1/12 at Castle Point. Allan Hershman noted that Rockland county does not provide transportation outside the county. Bridges (formerly RIL) purchased 2 new vans and will be able to transport outside. Vets who partook of the VA transport service received a letter with vet county

agencies to seek alternative transportation. One option is to see if they can access a local VA clinic for their needs. Veterans who cannot locate alternative transportation are encouraged to contact Rep. Maloney's office. Oscar Dunham also noted that this directive is not the result of a lack of manpower or funding, but a lack of policy and procedure which was never established when the VA transportation program was implemented. A letter to VA Healthcare Director Margaret Caplan asks that the VA transportation program be continued through March 31st to explore alternatives, communicate with veterans and allow for service through the winter months.

Leora Barish and Ryan O'Sullivan: Heroic Food – Leora gave an introduction and Ryan gave a slideshow presentation on the program. The program seeks to give veterans a new mission as food providers in their community and to replace the 'aging out' farmers who's current average age is 59. Currently there is no one to take the place of these elder farmers. They offer weekend workshops, a 12-month immersion program, and Farm Squad; a 3-day bootcamp. Participants do not need any farming experience. They need drive and commitment as this is not easy work, but works well for the veteran community. They also maintain key national strategic partnerships. www.heroicfood.org

Jonathan Barnwell: Green to Gold – Jonathan is the Veteran Coordinator at Rockland Community College. The Green to Gold program was developed through a grant to provide financial literacy to veterans and is taught by Patrick Curran. They have completed two workshops so far and are starting a new one at the end of the month (1/21). Jonathan talked about the financial status of many of the veterans at RCC. \$20k-\$30k debt (and more) are not uncommon. Participants learn the difference between good debt and bad debt. Through the course they develop their own business plan and present it. Success stories abound and many have gone on to become home owners. The program is not limited to students at RCC and is open to all veterans. The ultimate goal is to assist veterans with building a career, living with purpose and creating the life they want.

Christine Bruckner: SquirrelWood Equine Sanctuary – In the interest of time, Christine has agreed to present at the next meeting. However, Larry made note of the 2 full page, full color article which appeared in the Times Herald-Record the previous day which dealt with her program to use rescue horses to help veterans heal from emotional wounds. Larry noted that a veteran he referred to her program in state of isolation and crisis, has improved greatly as a direct result of his participation in the program.

Report out: Larry/Linda/Christian/Pat Fayo – Participated in the recent Panel Discussion at DCC hosted by the United Way of Orange/Dutchess. Keynote speaker was Marc Caviello. Each panel member described their program and gave insight and opinion on the needs, as they see them based on their program deliverables, within the veteran community. A question/answer session followed.

New Business: Several new for 2017 Initiatives were briefly presented. They include;

1. "HIRE VETERANS FIRST" Employment Initiative
 - Meet with employers and develop a list employers who are willing to train, hire and meet the unique needs of veteran employees.
2. "Hall of Honor at HONORehg" Housing Initiative
 - We have the space and it just requires some final touches to make it special for our veterans. If we get a group together, we can do this!
3. 2017 Hudson Valley Veteran Appreciation Day at Dutchess Stadium
 - Currently set for 7/15/17 to coincide with "Christmas in July" and Toys for Tots toy drive, this event has great potential and a proven history. It takes a lot of effort and people to make it seem so effortless. Please sign up.

4. “QRF” (Quick Reaction Force) of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force
 - A group of “first responders” to a veteran in crisis to determine what the vet needs and see through to completion.
 - May also be listed as a link on The Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force website.
5. HV Veteran Task Force Website
 - Proposed by Barbara Allen to create a website which gives the Task Force an internet presence and use as a repository for goals, accomplishments, documents (meeting agendas and minutes) and etc.
6. Multi-County Paintball Competition
 - This will require a principal from each county to recruit and organize veterans from their local. Goal is to appeal to younger vets (post 9/1) and engage in physical activity by creating a cross county competition.
 - Model can be used for other sports such as bowling, golf, softball, etc

Sign-up sheets are available for new initiative sub-committees, although due to time constraints, the sign-up process was deferred to the next meeting.

Task Force members were asked to submit any ideas for other initiatives.

Homeless cases/referrals/new cases: Linda McNiff/WestCOP

Linda identified that the current caseload for homeless veterans was at an all-time low. Only four new cases for Orange County. We are now closer towards ‘functional zero’

• Upcoming Events:

- 1/12: VA Healthcare Town Hall: Castle Point
- 1/14: Suits For Soldiers Comedy Show / Croton Falls, NY
- 1/20: Suits For Soldiers Comedy Show / Chester, NY
- 1/21: Community Listening Session: Newburgh Armory Unity Center
- 1/23: NARCAN Training: Grace Episcopal Church, Middletown
- 1/23: Point In Time Count: Dutchess County
- 1/27: Point In Time Count: Orange County
- 1/30: Vet2Vet Film Screening: “Joe’s War”
- 1/30: Point In Time Count: Ulster County
- Valentines for Veterans: US Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 11:15am by Larry Neumann. The next general meeting will be at 9:00am on February 8, 2017, at Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Larkin Conference Room, Crossroads Corporate Park, 30 Scotts Corners Drive, Montgomery, NY 12549.

Minutes taken by: Angela JoHenze

Minutes typed and submitted by: Larry Neumann