



## Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting Minutes of March 8, 2017



**OPENING** The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:15 on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Crossroads Corporate Park, 30 Scotts Corners Drive, Montgomery, NY 12549 by Larry Neumann. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Introductions were made first of all the guest speakers and all those present introduced themselves. The sign-in sheet was passed around. **MISSION STATEMENT** The mission statement was read. The meeting began with Larry shared his story of why he works with homeless veterans. He reported on the amazing work the task force had done during the month: helped veteran with move and referred veterans for employment training.

**PRESENT** Many veteran and human service agencies of Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Sullivan Counties were represented. Also in attendance were the guests/presenters; Jillian Nadiak for the Adam C. Nadiak Scholarship; Colleen Hughes, Fred and Nick Polsinelli from PharmaCannis; David Lionheart Play for your Freedom; and Mark Cerberville of ACCESS Supports for Living. There were a total of 31 in attendance.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS**

**Jillian Nadiak - Adam C. Nadiak Scholarship** - Jillian was introduced by Larry as a reporter, actress and musician. Her Brother Adam passed away last year on April 1st. She has created a scholarship for a veteran whose studies will be in the field of helping veterans. She shared the story of her brother's struggles with PTSD, anxiety and drug addiction. Her brother did not reach out for help; she would like to change the stigma so that does who need help can get it. A dinner for the scholarship will be held on April 1st at St. Mary/St. Andrew's church with a silent auction, baskets. The scholarship will be managed by the SUNY Ulster foundation. Her goal is to raise \$25,000 and the interest be used to give a \$1,000 scholarship every year.

**Colleen Hughes - Pharmacannis** - Colleen grew up in Orange County and Middletown. She is active with Leadership Orange and her goal has always been to help people. She also shared of the stigma behind people talking about their problems. Pharmacannis is a cultivation center and dispensary. There are 5 licensed medical cannabis dispensaries in New York.

In New York, cannabis must be processed to be used as medicine (no rolling of cigarettes). The process begins with a doctor visit. The doctor must be certified. The treatment begins in steps. The medicine is placed in vape cartridge, and the kit is dispensed in a bag with a lock.

The team from Pharmacannis are all from pharmaceutical backgrounds. The goal is to have PTSD as an approved condition. They believe that cannabis will keep the patient from elevating to self-medication and future illegal drug use. They would like stop the misinformation, and educate to change the stigma behind the use of cannabis.

Pharmacannis just launched a We are Listening Campaign with emphasis that medical cannabis is not recreational. They have a legislative strategy to move their research on the problem of opiate use in New York state and nationally. Since the facility opened in Hamptonburgh - approximately 2 years, there has been a 60% reduction in opiate use.

Discussion: Is there a care coordination? Physicians must be qualified. The process is a system of integrated approval of doctors with pharmacy. Patients are in constant communication with both the doctors and pharmacist.

The VA cannot prescribe. Federal laws prohibit. A patient must go to a doctor outside of the VA

Questions? Where is the medical community on this? Where are you in getting this information out? Not allowed to advertise; stigma; what is seen/positive outcomes; new program; hospitals are trying to figure out their own policies; must see grassroots doctors which are currently treating; importance to educate doctors on treatment; find other ways to disperse information/studies; there have been 0 deaths from use of cannabis. Information and studies are available. A lot of science comes from Europe and Israel.

**David Lionheart - Play for Your Freedom** - Working with Renegades and hospital community. Doing working out/exercise events. The Renegades' events for veterans. One veteran family will be honored at every game. Goal is to connect civilian and veteran communities. On May 17th, Dutchess Stadium having a Wiffle ball event.

**Mark Cerberville - ACCESS Support for Living** - Affordable housing initiative for special needs. New housing is being built in Middletown - Buena Vista and also Temple Hill in New Windsor. Currently, taking applications for Temple Hill facility. Housing for veterans with disabilities

Apartments are mostly one bedroom and some 2 bedrooms; on site care managers; 30% of rent is supplemented; Utilities are covered except for electricity.

Looking to have support groups at locations. Other mental health services to be provided by the Mental Health Association. The office on location will have 24/7 case management.

Questions? Definition of veteran/qualifications - discharge can be honorable or dishonorable; criminal issues will be reviewed; many issues would be addressed and reviewed; rent must be paid; furniture is provided when funds are available.

#### **TASK FORCE HOMELESS CASES/REFERRALS/NEW CASES**

7 Veterans: 5 Orange; 2 Sullivan (3 - House; 3 - HONOR (1 MAC, 1 HUD, 1 application processing); 2 Sullivan - applications in process. Putnam County - 11 Vets in veteran housing and there are 2 openings.

#### **NEW BUSINESS/SUB-COMMITTEES:**

**2017 HVVTF Initiatives** - Larry reintroduced the committees and their purposes/goals. Sub-Committees to report out at next month's meeting.

- **"Hall of Honor" at HONORehg** - the area is especially for Veterans. Needs to be refurbished. Possibly with a patriotic but not militaristic theme. Future goal to expand for women and families
- **"Hire Vets First" Employment Initiative** - Veterans need jobs and training. There are employers ready to hire. Everett meeting with Chamber to create an entrepreneurial prospects and work at home for disabled veterans.

- **QRF: Quick Reaction Force** - To address quick and immediate needs of veterans. County lists are outdated. Small groups to address certain issues.
- **2017 Veteran Appreciation Day at Renegades Dutchess Stadium** - Agencies pay for the seats. Last year around 600 veterans and their families/guests in attendance; each received a meal ticket and a fireworks show. This year, there is a goal of 2000 tickets. From Planning Committee: It will be held on September 3rd. Funding is needed - approximately \$40,000.

**Paintball Competition/Trophy Event** – Meeting to be scheduled to look at new location.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 11:05am by Larry Neumann.

The next general meeting will be at 9:00am on April 12, 2017, at Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Larkin Conference Room, Crossroads Corporate Park, 30 Scotts Corners Drive, Montgomery, NY 12549.

Minutes taken and typed by: Millie Rivera-Velez

Minutes reviewed and submitted by: Larry Neumann

Amendment:

Hi Larry,

Thanks for sharing this with me.

I wanted to make a few corrections to the minutes regarding PharmaCann to help clarify a few points for everyone's edification.

PharmaCann is our R&D brand and cultivation center in Montgomery. *PharmaCannis* is our dispensary brand, we have 4 locations in NY: Bronx, Albany, Syracuse and Buffalo.

There are only 5 licensed Registered Organizations in NY, (companies who are licensed to grow, process and dispense cannabis medicine) each RO has 4 dispensaries and there are 20 total dispensaries in the state (I know this is a confusing concept in an already hard to understand industry).

Also, there is a mention of a 60% reduction in opiate use in the 2 years we have been open. While I would love to take credit for this statistic, it's not quite accurate. It should say in states where medical cannabis is legal, opiate use, opiate-related deaths, and complications are reduced on average of 60%. That statistic should not have been in reference to PharmaCann being open.

Here's an article about a reduction [in "benzo" usage](#) as well with medical cannabis. Unrelated to the minutes, but relevant in a reduction of harmful pharmaceutical medications.

I hope you got to enjoy the beautiful day! A few colleagues and I had a picnic lunch at the arboretum today. Glorious!

Be Well,

Colleen Hughes