

Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting

Minutes of April 12, 2017

OPENING: The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:02am on Wednesday, April 22, 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.

PRESENT: Many veteran and human service agencies of Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Sullivan Counties were represented. Also in attendance were the guests/presenters; Faith Moore: OCRDAC (Orange County Rural Development Advisory Corporation); Rob Bowen and Larry Degregorio: Suits for Soldiers; Ryan O'Sullivan: Heroic Food and Armed Forces Day. There were a total of 33 in attendance.

MISSION STATEMENT: The mission statement was read.

The mission of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force is to address the needs of those who served by having relevant agencies meet collectively, regularly and cooperatively, to ensure the timely administration of services and referrals in order to achieve an end to Veteran homelessness and meet their immediate and long term needs.

HAPPENINGS: Larry reported and gave accolades for the accomplishments of the task force in the last month. First, he spoke of a vet that was chronically homeless and how we have aided him in finding housing, a new contentment with his situation, and offering guidance towards self management. And while giving another formerly homeless veteran a ride to Castle Point, the veteran mentioned appreciatively the many people that assisted him in moving forward to his current positive transition.

Larry quoted Mark Twain: "There are three types of lies. A lie. A damn lie and a statistic." There are some sobering statistics that we cannot ignore. The suicide rate of veterans since 2001 has increased 35% for male and 85% for females. Women veterans don't identify as veterans. We as a task force need to identify and connect with women veterans.

Nelson Rivera shared how he experienced this first hand. He had taken in his wife to the emergency room and she was not asked the veteran questions, but then a few days later he took his father in law and he was asked if he was a veteran. In New York, emergency rooms need to ask if you are a veteran or in the Armed Forces.

Angela Jo Henze mentioned an Orange County grant for suicide prevention for the largest group of suicides - white male ages 25 to 55. The Suicide prevention group is meeting the first Thursday of each month.

LG stated there is a report Canandaigua suicide prevention hotline. This is the veteran hotline for the entire country. Some of the findings are: very little follow-up; very few statistics; long hold time; calls referred to queue center; those calls are not considered on hold. At a town hall it was reported that everything was corrected. Representatives of the Task Force would like to visit the call center. Link to report will be sent to Larry and he will forward it to the team.

Larry Neumann and Allan Hershman presented a framed picture of PFC Joseph P. Dwyer with award plaque to Cullen Lyons, the Veteran and Military Advocate from the office of Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney. The award is for the congressman's dedication to the Vet2Vet program.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Faith Moore - OCRDAC (Orange County Rural Development Advisory Corporation) - She expressed her appreciation for the invitation. She had a realization of the struggles veterans face until it struck her own family. In 1983, OCRDAC was formed and this year they are celebrating their 35 year anniversary. The corporation was started by Alice Dickinson (her mom) during the foreclosure crisis.

The corporation manages many housing programs: foreclosure advocacy and assistance; first time home buyers and other housing issues. They manage a grant to provide refurbishing to veteran homes with physical disabilities and other non-typical disabilities such as PTS. Participants may be able to qualify for more than one program. Veterans must have a service related disability.

Question: David Lionheart - Do rentals qualify for assistance? Rentals are ok for modification with owner's approval. Can negotiate rental assistance. WESTCOP can provide rental assistance. However, SSVF is not a housing subsidy.

Question: Derek Brown - Veteran living with his family who are going through foreclosure. This would be categorized as , "housing at risk" and may meet program eligibility requirements for SSVF.

Faith stated there is a need to educate on the foreclosure process and rights. Some companies will threaten immediate loss of housing.

They manage a NYS grant for homeowner 60 yrs or older with services needed for the health and safety. Applicants can be veterans or nonveterans.

Question: Do you provide services for other counties? They are an Orange County program, but have been able to get waiver for other counties.

Rob Bowen and Larry Degregorio, Farmer's Insurance - Suits for Soldiers - collecting, partnered with "Save a Suit" clearing house and distributed across country.

Larry Degregorio introduced Suits for Soldiers Comedy Show Events - Throughout US; looking for venues such as civic halls; suits for reduced admission; profit to group; 100 suits collected. Next event - May 19 at Monroe American Legion. He can be contacted at: Larry DeGregorio itainteasycomedy@aol.com

Rob Bowen - In 2015: 6,600 and in 2016: 77,000 suits were collected. Purpose is to put a suit on a soldiers back; getting them ready for interview; both men and women vets; comedians are vets. Items collected are suits, ties, shoes and shirts. Collection site - Farmer's Insurance in Chester Shop Rite Plaza.

Discussion: David Lionheart suggested a digital interface - picture uploads; shop/choose/ship; get to vets in a day or two.

Questions? How do suits get to the soldier: Save a Suit clearinghouse distributes suits to organizations and also at job fairs.

West Point representative wants to get suits to the soldiers that are coming through West Point. How do you get suits that are ready to be distributed? Ans: Contact clearinghouse.

Ryan O'Sullivan - Heroic Food, Hudson NY - He is 9 year USMC veteran who served 3 tours in Iraq. Heroic Food offers agricultural training programs for veterans with immersion weekend workshops. For longer immersion experiences, veterans are placed with farms in various countries. One partner is Dutchess County Community College. Many farms want to hire veterans.

The Hudson Valley Alliance aids veterans in; breaking down barriers; working with and providing programs at local colleges. A veteran resource lounge is located at Dutchess Community college with veteran advocates and computers. Trying to connect with Marist and requested a contact. Teamed up with Home Depot in assisting veterans with home repairs. Currently they have 9 cases and trying to get other Home Depots aboard.

Future events: End of year barbeque; May 20 Armed Forces Day.

REPORT OUT:

Adam C. Nadiak Scholarship Event - successful, raised over \$1,000.

Play For Your Freedom upcoming events: Wiffle Ball event at Dutchess Stadium on May 17 - come out to meet veterans; Vet2Vet to provide information table. Football game on May 8 at the Newburgh Armory.

Mark Cerberville - ACCESS Support for Living - looking for veteran housing referrals.

Howie Goldsmith: Sullivan County Veterans Coalition Fundraiser -Exceptional event to raise money for Battle Buddy room. 180 attended.

Dr. Allen Hersman: Military Behavioral Health Training Course - New cycle to begin April 29 at the Bridges. Space for 25 and currently have 15 registered. David Lionheart gave kudos to the program and how it is about 70 hours information in three Saturday sessions.

Allan reported that the Hudson Valley Harley Davidson has a monthly veteran coffee gathering.

Honor Flight Mission #15 - participants: 30+ WWII, 60 Korean and 2 Vietnam; 200 motorcycle escort. Event was well attended and inspirational for all present. Many cheered on these special veterans. In Washington DC they are treated to a big event and come home tired but elated at the experience. Any who can attend as a spectator should do so. Question: What is the cost for escorts? Ans: \$500

NEW BUSINESS/SUB-COMMITTEES:

2017 HVVTF Initiatives - Linda McNiff reported

- **QRF: Quick Reaction Force** - Identifying community leads to create a core base for establishing a rapid response to a crisis situation. (Larry, Christian and Linda contacts) .
- **"Hire Vets First" Employment Initiative** – Will be working with the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. Need to recognize employers and provide incentives. Enhancing throughout Hudson Valley.
- **"Hall of Honor" at HONORehg** – Reaching out to local artists to paint a mural in the veteran room at HONOR. New donated bed linens from the Hudson Valley Hero Project (Marc Coviello) to be delivered to Kim Brink of HONOR. General painting needed.
- **2017 Veteran Appreciation Day at Renegades Dutchess Stadium** - committee to meet April 28. At event, 3 barbeque areas, fireworks, 1500 to 2000 attendees, additional enhancements. Sponsors needed.
- **HV Task Force website** - Pat Fayo and Larry to work on this.
- **Paintball Competition/Trophy Event** - Committee to meet April 18 with location in Patterson, NY Price for event is better than previous location.

TASK FORCE HOMELESS CASES/REFERRALS/NEW CASES

Larry reported the warming stations are now closed and homeless back out on the streets. Port Jervis warming station - 4 veterans identified. One veteran was housed and the others have been hard to reach. Linda reported - Orange County- 7: 1 housed on April 4, 1 moved to Texas, 4 in application process, 1 unable to reach. Sullivan - only homeless veteran housed in April.

A few will now be considered chronically homeless; currently seeing repeats (have been assisted before). Kim stated that COC needs to be made aware so that can work on housing. Some locations available - Temple Hill and RECAP housing. Need to work on convincing veterans that housing is better than homelessness.

Breaking Ground, transitional housing @ the VA @ Montrose, NY is closing September 30,2017. Capacity is 97 veterans; 74 current residents will be losing housing. WESTCOP is working the VA @ Montrose to address the permanent housing needs of the residence. Paul Stoltz, Director of Hudson Valley Homeless Veteran Services to attend next meeting and report on status/impact to the Hudson Valley.

Discussion: More veterans are being housed and more are being placed in permanent housing. Landlords are not as willing to rent to our target population. Kim has a list of landlords in area.

Upcoming Events - review, introductions and additions. May other events were highlighted. Larry requested information be sent to him so he could forward to the task force mailing list.

Adjournment :

Meeting was adjourned at 11:02am by Larry Neumann.

The next general meeting will be at 9:00am on Wednesday, May 10, 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