

Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting

Minutes of June 14, 2017

OPENING: The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:10am on Wednesday, June 14, 2017 at the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Crossroads Corporate Park, 30 Scotts Corners Drive, Montgomery, NY 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: Janice Valentino, Kim Warner, Stephen Marsh, Joseph McKeegan. There were a total of 21 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.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Larry shared, introduced and read a selection from warrior writer's workshop: a writing recounting a mentor's visit and of the veteran's traumatic hospital experience and the condition of vet's body.

GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS

Janice Valentino, Director of Marketing & Development and Kim Warner, Director of Social Work & Bereavement/Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties, Inc.:

Introduced a program specifically for veterans on their last journey of life. Currently, reaching to veterans that would be willing to become a certified hospice volunteers.

Background - a few years ago contacted by Hospice of Chesapeake. they teamed up with Annapolis and the midshipman provided the honor/salute for hospice. There were some West Point cadets present and they wanted to do this locally. They contacted local Hospice. The cadets have been providing this service for hospice, but have very limited time. The Veteran to Veteran program "We Honor Veterans" was developed in 2010. There is a website available.

Currently, the VFW and other veteran organizations have provide the honor salutes. The Honor is so rewarding and especially moving because it is still done while the veteran is still living. There is no way to know when the honor is needed. Some patients come at the last minute.

The program provides assistance in getting medals, sitting at the bed side, conversation with families, helping veteran to tell their story, impact of service, unique needs of veterans. 1 out 4 patients are veterans. 1,800 veterans die each day. Review of their life and conversation with their families. Many hospices are doing this program. The program works at identifying veterans when admitted. The goal is to obtain volunteers with the point of view of a veteran experience. Identify things that they are sensitive to such as bed placement, fears, ordeals of unique to end of life, body betrayal, etc.

Story shared of: Sullivan County veteran, he was very quiet. Humbly admitted to being a gunner sergeant and connected with one veteran volunteer. He shared how he became almost homeless; estranged from his family. He was asked about creating a recognition event. He was reluctant and then agreed to a small honor event. He wanted, Oreos and root beer for his event with the Chaplain, Veteran mentor, nurse and others important in his life. Provided pins and a blanket. This moment was about 20 minutes. At that point, he was legally blind and did not want to leave his bed but the volunteers convinced him. He said, "I should not be scared I'm a soldier, but I am very scared." The volunteer come to be with him at the end of life. He did not die alone.

Looking for people with the veteran experience to volunteer. The volunteer process is multi faceted - education in conditions, HIPA and other sensitivity awareness.

Question: Any statistics about veterans in the region? 900 program participants about 75% were veterans.

Question: Where does this care occur? 11 bed facility in Newburgh, some in their nursing homes, and others in their homes. All participants have a team that works with them.

A poster with pictures of Honor salutes and a patriotic blanket was shared with the group. A blanket is given to each veteran; pin with we honor veterans, a child's card and a certificate personalized for veteran. Bridge generations with cards provided with children in scouting troops and other groups. These become treasurers for the family. Even for a unresponsive participant, the family was willing to have honor/salute and the family was very appreciate.

Discussion: David Lionheart - Another way to honor veteran participants, he would like to propose to his connection with the Renegades to have name of veteran written on player's jersey and provide it to family after game.

Questions: how long does it take to organize the salute? depends on the type of recognition wanted by veteran or family.

Shared forms of program and a printed story.

**Stephen Marsh, Director of Pharmacy US Army and Joseph McKeegan, Pharmacist/Vet2Vet Facilitator;
Veteran Wellness Program:**

Preemptive program primarily about medication usage. Joseph McKeegan started with the Joseph P. Dwyer training and provided a medication component. Bring veterans into program talk to them one on one to meet and discuss medications. Veteran's talking to veterans.

Medication side - Most people don't ask questions. Program to break barrier down to discuss the medication, treatment and partner with physicians. Discuss side effects and continue working to help the individual. Most veterans today get medications from VA system. Identifying veterans - many receive medications through mail order and do not have a discussion about their medication and treatment.

Brown bag evaluation - bring in all medications in bag and sit down and have a discussion about the reason for each one. Some situations patients are taking duplicate treatments. Some have payment issues because of high cost of medications so are not taking much needed medication. Possibly find a revenue stream to provide medications. Wellness program identified vaccinations needed. Identify best program/treatment and keep

patient on it. Evaluating, provide timely medication, delivery, calling customers when medications are not picked up; also provide support program for activities - ace bandages, etc. Guidance for patients. Also, provide information and facilitate usage of other programs that are wellness related.

Question: Who can we work with to assist our participants? Talk to Physician? Outreach program connect with the agencies of this task force. VA system is not friendly, regimented. we are friendly, a local program to assist veterans with wellness.

Do Veterans come to you? Yes. Vet2Vet programs can provide rides, and other veteran groups will also assist.

A onetime visit and then a phone conversation for future advisement. Orange Country delivery. A place that they can speak to someone about how their medication is making them feel. Joseph willing to call doctors when there is a problem with dosage.

Question: A conversation about the comment about VA is not friendly. More convenient for a veteran to go to his/her local pharmacy and doctor.

Question: Linda McNiff - Have you come across the opioid epidemic? He does not see it at his pharmacy. Highly monitored medication situation. NYS has the best system of controlled substance. The electronic system for the controlled substance prescriptions all is documented. Prescriptions are not filled until 3 day prior to the need. A tightening of availability of the controlled substances. Pharmacies can be locked out of ordering.

Another issue is community pharmacies running out of medication. Many customers are 9/11 survivors needing treatment and medication is not available. Also, people at end of life situations find medications unavailable. The controlled substance is coming from out of the country. Production is being cut by a government mandate and does not help our pharmacists. Some patients suffering from cancer in need of high doses of narcotics, and sometimes it is not available.

VETERAN SERVICE AND COUNTY UPDATES:

- **Dutchess County**
 - **VSO: Nelson "Eddy" Rivera, Director - excused**
 - **Vet2Vet: Robert Jennings, Program Manager - excused**
- **Orange County**
 - **VSO: Christian Farrell, Director** - Barbara reported, An event to salute veterans of Orange County will be held on July 15th at the Orange County Park. There are 100 spots, veterans will be provided with dinner and a fireworks show. If anyone know a veteran that should be honored please contact the Orange County Veteran Service Office at (845) 291-2470.
 - There has been an increase in calls for veterans in need of home care. There is a gap in coverage and many veterans cannot afford this specialized care. It would be a benefit to identify or provide these services. The need to relieve caretakers is important. Suggestion: Everyday Angels. Contact Orange County but there is an income eligibility. Call to Anne Milligan, revealed that the VA is maxed out. Nicole to look into this issue.

- **Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator** - Provided a slide show of past events, and reported on Armed Forces Day, Paintball Competition, Salute to Veterans, Rolling Thunder Salute to Veterans Ride. Many upcoming events - go out and participate.
- **Putnam County**
 - **VSO: Karl Rohde, Director** - Because of budget cuts itinerant offices, training have been will be closed and restructured. The NYS veterans affairs offices in Putnam County will be closed and services are to be provided at Castle Point. Karl requested help in the form of calls to request the offices stay open. The main purpose is to serve veterans. Currently, serves many veterans in that area and many neighboring communities. Many services will not be available if these offices are closed.
- **Rockland County**
 - **VSO: Dr. Allen L Hershman, Veteran Services Coordinator** - We had the first "finding your new mission" event. We anticipated about 200 - there were about 150. A lot presentations and speakers. Next year, planning to get a better turn out. Opening and closing were fantastic.
- Next military behavioral 9/9 16 & 23, 8am and Rockland County Community College. 20 slots and have 6 signed up. Contact him for prospective students. He is trying to provide training in other locations.
 - Have a survivor's group that is meeting. Very successful. The current facilitators are being deployed. A need for someone to facilitate the group. 2 hours once a month.
- **Sullivan County**
 - **VSO: Howie Goldsmith, Coordinator - excused**
- **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney**
 - **Cullen Lyons, Veteran and Military Advocate - excused**

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) .
- **2017 Veteran Appreciation Day at Renegades Dutchess Stadium** - Linda - handing out flyers. Need of sponsorship. 1,500 veterans and family members. Renegade decorating with military theme. If you would like space, up to 36 tables - some can share. Game at 7:05pm. It will be very exciting. Invitation to attend and wants to accommodate all to participate.
- **HV Task Force website** - Currently in negotiations. May be going live with Google docs to make minutes and other paperwork accessible. Get logos to Larry.
- **Paintball Competition/Trophy Event** - Everyone is a winner. Trophy is going to make tour of all VSOs.

TASK FORCE HOMELESS CASES/REFERRALS/NEW CASES -Linda McNif

- 6 homeless veterans in orange county
 - 1 housed on 12th
 - 1 housed on 15th
 - 1 waiting on HUD bash

- 1 at honor for 6 months - woman vet - housing issues - need to identify her housing preference - may have special circumstances. Forming a team to work collectively to assist. Family dynamic - Husband and 11 year old daughter. May have opportunities for her at Access.
- 1 not wanting housing mental health issues
- 1 housing challenges because of legal issues
- Linda reported that there are many more veterans with challenging situations. Challenges include schizophrenia, chronic homelessness, spends a lot of time outside and preference of outdoors.

Larry gave the **Play For Your Freedom** event accolades. It was a great event with a very supportive environment. The veterans are out of the hospital and talking with each other. Shared that half the attendees were not feeling too good. Came with negative attitudes and left completely positive. The closing remarks were inspiring.

Upcoming Events - review, introductions and additions.

- Rachel , Youth Bureau - funding available - grant programs for youth - orangecountygov.com. Comment: Thank you for grant received to continue the healthy orange - veterans exercise program.
- June 25 - 67th Korean War Anniversary/64th Armistice Anniversary at American Legion Post 151
- July 1 & 2 - Great American Weekend, Goshen, NY
- July 31st - Movie night on 7:30pm "Invisible War", free to veterans, excellent speakers and panel.
- August 1 - National Night Out Against Crime - Welcome Orange agencies will have a booths at locals throughout the county.
- August 20 and September 9 & 10 - 2 yellow ribbon event 400 servicemen/women being deployed

Adjournment :

Meeting was adjourned at 11:15am by Larry Neumann.

The next general meeting will be at 9:00am on **Wednesday, July 12, 2017**, at Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Larkin Conference Room, 30 Scotts Corners Drive, Montgomery, NY.

Minutes taken and typed by: Millie Rivera-Velez

Minutes reviewed and submitted by: Larry Neumann