

Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting

Minutes of July 12, 2017

OPENING: The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:05 am on Wednesday, July 12, 2017 at the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery, NY by Christian Farrell. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. There was a moment of silence for the 16 servicemen who died due to the C-130 plane crash in Mississippi. Several were connected to the Stewart Air National Guard Base.

MISSION STATEMENT: The mission statement was read by Larry Neumann.

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.

PRESENT: Many veteran and human service agencies of Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Sullivan Counties were represented. Also in attendance were the guests/presenters: Steven Rego, Mike Wickham, George M. Barnes, and Janice Valentino. There were a total of 32 in attendance. Introductions went around the table. Christian Farrell welcomed all in attendance and mentioned the full house and the many new representatives. He also shared the group growth, and how it all started a year and half ago with a breakfast meeting at IHOP.

GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS

Steven Rego, LCSW, Director, Vet Center, Middletown, NY & Mike Wickham: Vietnam Veterans

- Veteran Centers began in 1980 with the Orange County center opening in 2008
- Services Provided
 - Readjustment counseling;
 - family and marital counseling;
 - VA claim assistance
 - Up to 3 visits for non combat.
- Extended hours Sunday until 8:30pm.
- Relationship with the VA healthcare systems. Most referrals come from VA
- Qualifications
 - Open to combat veterans (at least 1 day) and veterans that suffered Military Sexual Trauma
 - All discharge statuses welcomed, except dishonorable discharged vets.
- There are other regional offices in Westchester and Danbury, CT.
- Discussion: Howie Goldsmith expressed Kudos for their services and all the good they do for the veterans. Much easier to go to the Vet center than go to the VA. Others shared their stories and most have referred veterans to the center.

George M. Barnes, West Point Installation, Suicide Prevention Manager:

- West Point Out of Darkness Community Walk, September 16th and Daley Field.
 - September is Suicide Prevention Month.
 - A request for a veteran to have veteran's groups present at the event

- DOD Peer to Peer counseling Program
 - Army has a real problem with suicide.
 - In the past year, the Army has had 125 people commit suicide (soldiers, family, etc.). 91 of them are veterans.
 - One reason is the lack of support after they leave active duty.
 - Qualifications
 - for active duty/reserve -
 - Hotline with peers to talk.
 - 51% that commit suicide have been deployed and 49% have not.
 - Peers are available to talk about the many life issues.
 - Primarily focus Army, but through the DOD can see all veterans/armed forces.
 - Army has identified and actively changed the stigma for those suffering from mental illness (suicidal).
 - Training includes sensitivity to the current issues leading to suicide.
 - It is hard to change the stigma - some people personally feel that it is a sign of weakness.
 - No repercussion for coming forward to receive assistance.
 - Identified leaders with stories about unhealthy times when there were thoughts of suicide, and sharing them with the younger troops. Hoping this helps with stigma.

VETERAN SERVICE AND COUNTY UPDATES:

- **Dutchess County**
 - **VSO: Nelson "Eddy" Rivera, Director** - We must make sure that the visitors to our programs and receive services are veterans. He shared a story about a man who was receiving services and was not a veteran. There were many agencies trying to assist him with his emergency situation, but when proof of veteran status, he gave them the run around. Make sure that those served are Veterans or qualify for the services provided.
 - **Vet2Vet: Adam Roche, Program Manager** - Adam is doing a great job. Has many groups meeting. He started a family group.
 - Dutchess County has applied for Functional Zero - homeless initiative. In review process.
 - If you know someone, Deployed member of Dutchess County - Dutchess County Fair - Honoring them and their families.
- **Orange County**

VSO: Christian Farrell, Director -

 - Shared article in Times Herald Record about the cemetery. There has been a lot of funeral.
 - Orange County - the state has provided Fresh Connect vouchers for veterans. State representatives will be distributing \$20 fresh vegetable vouchers at Orange County Farmer's markets: Goshen - Friday, July 21st 10-2; Middletown- Saturday July 22nd; Newburgh - Tuesday, July 25th.
 - Freedom First - July 21st at the Thomas Bull Park in Montgomery, 50 veterans and their guests will be invited to watch fireworks and provided with free food and drink at the lodge. Gates will open at 3pm and 5pm for veterans.

Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator -

- Vet2Vet serves active duty and veterans alike.
 - Met with Sean Patrick Maloney about "getting the word out" - we don't know who the veterans are in our community. Who are they and how do we get the word out to them? There is a disconnect.
 - Statement - It is wonderful that we fill up this room with so many diverse service agencies.
 - Vet2Vet - AMVETS 2015 gave a donation to Vet2Vet. The donation will help a lot and is greatly appreciated.
 - 30 July - Whispering Winds fundraiser - last year's event was very successful. It was all encompassing with a patriotic flare. It provided information for and about veterans, and the services provided by Vet2Vet.
 - Movie night - The Invisible War dealing with military sexual trauma - The rate is greater than the regular population. It is an issue that is everywhere. College campuses are also suffering with this issue. Awareness is very important. Come to see the film. Downing Film Center, 7:30pm free will include some panelist.
 - August 1st National Night Out Against Crime - communities get together and put on events with public service agencies. Vet2Vet will have representation in Middletown and Port Jervis
- **Putnam County**
VSO: Karl Rohde, Director
 - Fundraiser on Monday, local group had a fundraiser golf outing
 - Family movie night for veterans and their families -
 - Provide outings to Renegades games - 62 veterans attended last event.
 - Town hall meeting July 26th
 - Safe Talk training - Suicide Prevention - kudos about the program. Certified Safe Talk trainers. Provide future events upon request.
 - There office has provided services for 30 years. A veteran's affairs counselor has been available to see veterans locally. Still fighting the changes that will hurt services needed by veteran. Sean Patrick Maloney has been trying to assist the program.
- **Rockland County**
Vet2Vet: Dr. Allen L Hershman, Veteran Services Coordinator -
 - Just a few weeks ago had the conference, Finding Your Next Purpose And Mission. Currently, planning for next year's event. Reaching out to neighboring counties.
 - Next Military Behavioral Training - Sept 9, 16 & 23 at Rockland County Community County.
 - Full weekend training in Dutchess County October 28/29. Ceremony November 4 FDR Presidential Museum together with the Dutchess County Veteran Appreciation Day.
- **Sullivan County**
VSO: Howie Goldsmith, Coordinator
 - Rotary and Sullivan County Veteran's Coalition Fundraising Run on September 23. 5th augmentation stage for the cemetery program.
 - Janice - 1st honor salute for Hospice was very heart warming.
 - Veterans that have been discharged. Can buy from the exchange - online. Should be available November 11 - vetverify.org. Benefits - free shipping and tax free.
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- **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney**
Cullen Lyons, Veteran and Military Advocate - excused.

Janice Valentino, Director of Marketing & Development, Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties, Inc. -

- Veteran Joseph Gomes gave permission to tell his Hospice Honor story so that others could experience the joy of being honored as veterans. The presentation is brought to us on his behalf by Pat Fayo his niece. Janice shared a slide show and video of the July 1st Honor event. Larry thanked both Pat Fayo and Howie for sharing this touching and personal event.

NEW BUSINESS/SUB-COMMITTEES:

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

- 6 homeless veterans in Orange County
 - 2 housed
 - 2 sleeping in cars and currently, couch surfing
 - 1 chronically homeless - challenges because of legal issues and bad conduct discharge which creates a limit to resources - still monitoring the situation and working with Vet2Vet
 - 1 chronically homeless - hitchhiking - lives in tent. Working with him trying to get a voucher. Everett of Vet2Vet is trying to work with him to convince him to change his situation. It has become a health issue.
- Linda reported Orange County soon to achieve Function Zero - must provide shelter or provide permanent housing for veterans. Veterans need a lot of resources. She expressed her gratitude to the agencies for assisting with these projects. Hopefully, the application will be completed and accepted.
- Question: Are we working with the veteran's mental health issues or homelessness? Working on both with VA and WestCOP. Statement: Statistics show that the housing issues should be addressed first and the mental health issues will be more successful.
- Sean Patrick Maloney to work on new initiative, "Housing Our Heroes". Using Zombie properties and transforming them into homes for veterans. The target primarily was homeless veterans initially, but the initiative has moved towards making it a pathway to home ownership for veterans.
- Dutchess County Habitat for Humanity - has a home for a veteran. Needs a Veteran to apply for program. They are using VA criteria. Note: A family has been identified.

2017 HVVTF Initiatives - Linda McNiff reported

- **2017 Veteran Appreciation Day at Renegades Dutchess Stadium** - On track for event. Reached out to HVVTF with poster, save the date and sponsorship forms. Looking to have videos from our soldiers overseas. 4 tickets per household. Barbecue, completely military themed. All tickets will be distributed by the Renegades. Many information booths. 2X larger than last year.
- **HV Task Force Facebook Page** - Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force on Facebook. Join group.

Upcoming Events - review, introductions and additions.

- Nelson introduced the **VA's Town Hall meetings**. VA Castle Point - Holding Veteran Town Hall meetings. Experts available to discuss regional hot topics effecting veterans.
 - Goshen - July 21st 11am - 12pm at the Emergency Services Center.
 - July 28th in Carmel
 - August 3rd in Poughkeepsie
 - August 5th in New City
- July 31st - Vet2Vet Movie night, 7:30pm, free - "Invisible War" with speakers and panelists.
- August 1 - National Night Out Against Crime - Welcome Orange agencies will have a booths at locals throughout the county.
- MCHC 5th Annual Health Fair - Saturday, August 5th -Thrall Park, Middletown - 300 to 400 people attended.
- RECAP Events
 - August 4th grand opening of new offices in Newburgh
 - October 20th - Last golf outing of the season. Towards housing programs.
 - October 28th - Bus tour around the county - wineries and breweries tour. Dinner

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 11:00am by Larry Neumann.

The next meeting will be at 9:00am on **Wednesday, August 9, 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