

## **Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting**

### **Minutes of August 9, 2017**

**OPENING:** The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:10 am on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 at the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery, NY by Christian Farrell. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**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.

Introduction went around the table. Christian Farrell welcomed all in attendance and introduced the task force's beginnings and purpose for newcomers.

#### **GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS**

**Dan V. Schiavo, MS, CTRS; Community Liaison & Therapeutic Recreation Consultant, and Randolph "Randy" Blebiwas, Executive Officer of Beacon Place**

- Beacon Place, Highland Mills, NY - Traumatic Head Injuries (TBI) Services
  - Structured Day Program
  - Certified Brain Injury Specialist
  - Readjustment counseling;
  - Integration counseling:
  - Service Coordination: patient and families coping with change
  - Mental Health counseling
  - Medical component (future)
  - Speech Therapy/language (future)
- Discussion: Do you see a lot of veterans? The therapist is an Air Force veteran. Some resistance with treating Veterans. Would like to provide these services to veterans.
- Comments: A very real problem. These services are need. Football and other head injuries are not taken seriously. "It is not just about feeling sick. It is a real debilitating problem."
- Vet Center request for Beacon Place to come out a facilitate some groups.

**Ed Devitt II, Brain New Day**

- Thank you for invitation
- Sharing his story "Alcohol, Drugs and Speed = CRASH"
  - At a party, decided to leave, got a ride from someone who was drinking. The car was going 140 miles per hour. He briefly awoke to bridge rafters, blacked out and came to at the hospital.

- After the accident, he was distant and when he was told the other passengers did not make it, he was devastated.
- At a certain point, he was 100 lbs and being fed through feeding tubes. He decided and was determined to get out of the bed and do everything to recover from his injuries.
- Addiction is part of his story. After his accident, he was not the same.
- 18 years later, He had a SPEC scan and it showed all his invisible injuries.
- He was able to move forward and wanted to do something for others.
- Three (3) years ago, he attended a brain injury conference.
- Today - found love, married, children and able to continue to heal from his TBI. Attends special support groups.
- No he makes a difference and has a purpose. He is reaching out to other individuals with brain injuries.
- Talking Brains Initiative, non-profit- reach out to serve others with TBI and would like to align himself with veterans that are living with TBI.
- Veterans Wellness Golfing Outing, Saturday, August 26
- Questions & Discussion: Are there other locations doing scans? He knows about the one in Colorado. Psychologist can diagnosis TBI. A need for other specialist to treat TBI and other brain injuries.
- Organizations he has been able to participate with at conferences and other meetings are VA Brain Trust and Cohen's veterans services

#### **Whispering Winds Equestrian Gymkhana - Dawn**

- Started September 11, She and others felt inspired to do something for veterans.
- Huge horse community
- Patriotic theme - horses costumed;
- Fundraising within fundraiser - shirts, hats, bags, cake sales, raffles, etc.
- They raised \$2,079 last year for Orange County Vet2Vet
- This year, donations were collected for the families of the soldiers that were lost in the plane crash.
- This year they raised \$4,510. As a thank you for all of Dawn's efforts, Larry presented her with flowers, and all present gave her an appreciative round of applause.

#### **VETERAN SERVICE AND COUNTY UPDATES:**

- **Dutchess County**
  - **VSO: Nelson "Eddy" Rivera, Director** - Julio Oranda reported -
    - Dutchess county as achieved "Functional Zero" for homeless vets.
  - **Vet2Vet: Adam Roche, Program Manager**
    - Dutchess county fair - booth
    - Holding groups at Jewish community center and they are growing
    - Omega Institute - mind & body workshops - under discussion and will be funding a full weekend.
- **Orange County**
  - **VSO: Christian Farrell, Director** -
    - Close to football season - Middletown to honor veterans at half time.
    - Orange County Veterans Food Pantry - application - serving about 200+ with food institute

**Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator -**

- Movie night - The Invisible War dealing with military sexual trauma - Rape Crisis team.
- Veteran to Veteran Hospice Training event - September 13/25

• **Putnam County**

**VSO: Karl Rohde, Director**

- Quarterly movie morning - movie projector
- October 22 - veterans chow down with USO
- Veteran Office reopened and will have a new counselor. Was able to be open because of letters, congressman and other positive input.

• **Rockland County**

**VSO: Dr. Allen L Hershman, Veteran Services Coordinator -**

- Close relationship with Veteran Service Office and will be having Vet2Vet outreach person at the office.
- Next Military Behavioral Training - Sept 9, 16 & 23 at Rockland County Community County.
- October 28/29 two seven and half hour day events

• **Sullivan County**

**VSO: Howie Goldsmith, Coordinator**

- Fundraiser 5 & 10K - record turnout 260 people. Better than last year
- Veteran fair at the college August 17 at 10 to 2

• **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney**

**Cullen Lyons, Veteran and Military Advocate - excused.**

**Nicole Embrey, Hudson Veteran Health Services:**

- New Veteran Orientation -2nd Friday of every month except for November; at both campuses.

**NEW BUSINESS/SUB-COMMITTEES:**

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

- 6 homeless veterans in orange county
  - 3 living outside - 2 chronically homeless
  - 1 motel - unit being fumigated and serviced
  - 1 HONOR
  - 1 living in condemned home
- A new procedure put into practice - For a vet with clinical issues, an emergency team of all agencies on a call to create immediate response and reporting of services provided. The opportunity to work with vet and moving forward with all assisting agencies on board.
- Linda reported Orange County soon to achieve Function Zero - must provide shelter or provide permanent housing for veterans. Have created a rough draft and distributed to key programs.

**2017 HVVTF Initiatives - Linda McNiff reported**

- **2017 Veteran Appreciation Day at Renegades Dutchess Stadium** - 4pm gates open; 6:05 game begins; fireworks after game. Tickets available for veteran and 3 guests; gold Star families unlimited tickets. Meeting next Friday and will have numbers of tickets reserved.

**Upcoming Events - review, introductions and additions.**

- RECAP looking to start a committee for fundraiser. One project to redo the meditation garden with Home Depot. Call for volunteers - bowlers, golf outings, and other fundraising events.
- RECAP Events
  - October 20th - last golf outing of the season. towards housing programs.
  - October 28th - Bus tour around the county - wineries and breweries tour with dinner

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 11:06am by Christian Farrell.

The next meeting will be at 9:00am on **Wednesday, September 13, 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