

Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting Minutes/Notes of December 12, 2018

OPENING: The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:20 am on Wednesday, December 12, 2018 at the Orange County Department of Mental Health, 30 Harriman Drive, Goshen, NY by Larry Neumann. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Larry Neumann welcomed all present.

MISSION STATEMENT: The mission statement was recited 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. The guests/presenters are listed below. There were a total of **38** in attendance.

INTRODUCTIONS, Opening Remarks and Review of last month's meeting:

Larry opened with an introduction of the task force's beginnings and purpose. The task force started 5 years ago with a small group addressing veteran homelessness. Currently, we have approximately 50 agencies as part of the task force. Most of the agencies serve veterans and their families and some of human service agencies. Larry also gave a recap and update of last month's guests. He thanked everyone for providing the abundance of goodies for our meeting and the various donation pleas of the season.

Special Announcements:

Joseph Foundation Veteran's and Other Project – Michael McGarry, Allen Hershman and Father John Bonnici: Introduction of a new program trying to identify needs and provided the needed services.

GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS

Alison Bergmann – Operation Cookie Drop:

Introduced the program where pallets of Girl Scout cookies get distributed to troops in the US and abroad.

Lindsay Frusciante: Newburgh Veteran Drug Court Resource Coordinator:

She is the information and resource coordinator.

Individuals come to her to initiate the drug court program that assists with dealing with their substance and alcohol abuse legal issues. The program has 3 phases with each phase being approximately 4 months and is usually completed between 16 to 18 months.

Currently, there are 5 veteran participants. For veteran drug court there are mentors in place to assist with peer support. Veterans are asked to attend support groups. The program is a structured setting where in the veteran is held accountable for their daily lives and issues with drug or alcohol. Most of the participants have DWI convictions – the program helps with reduce sentencing and most of them are required to have interlock devices on their vehicles. The goal is allow the veteran/individual to get back on track.

This program will be revamped in the next few months and community service may be added as an option for the participants.

Newburgh Drug Court has a relationship with the Middletown Drug Court which is a separate entity. The Newburgh Drug Court is a supported project of Justice for our Veterans and is a granted program.

Questions: How does it start? The individual takes a plea and moves into the program. There are no probation officers with this program, but some participants have them for other violations. The District Attorney makes the decision to assign the person to the program. The next graduation is January 30th.

Gonzalo Cuevas: C7 Delivers – Food delivery service:

Gonzalo and a friend founded this business out of necessity and want for a better and more stable future. The friend was having a hard time finding and keeping employment. They both had goals of owning their own home. The program was introduced in Georgia and has expanded to New York with Newburgh and Middletown being new locations. It is a delivery service that primarily brings restaurant food to their customers. It has expanded to also do shopping and other chores outside the home. The fee is waived for first time users and to veterans.

The service can be introduced to veterans as an employment opportunity. His friend started the program 5 years ago and now owns a home. Primarily it is about giving back by providing a discount for veterans, but can help those that need additional income.

Questions: How do we get your service? Everything is done online through their website including purchases and employment inquiries. It is a 24 hour service. This give a prospective employee the opportunity to work different shifts and make their own hours.

TASK FORCE HOMELESS CASES Status:

- **WestCOP SSVF: Open/New Case Report - Christine**
 - Homeless cases 13; 11 new this month and 2 carry over.
 - Dutchess – 4
 - Orange County - 7
 - Sullivan - 1 today
 - Ulster – 1 just placed in Liberty house
 - Numbers are higher during the winter

2018: A year in review

Success stories

I – A success story of a homeless and displaced veteran

He came to us to assist with his homelessness. He was living in abandoned house.

He was a business owner with a great future, but after an accident that left him with a long recovery, he became addicted to drugs and alcohol. His life spiraled out of control.

After facilitating the domiciliary program at Montrose, a place to live afterwards, parenting classes, He is now bicycling to the gym every day and will be reunited with his kids.

This success story is because of the work of the task force.

II – A young veteran behind on his bills and presented with an opportunity to start a new job.

The job is in another state and he needed to travel to the job and have living expenses for himself plus leave his family with the bills paid.

We were able to raise the funds he needed for room & board and to leave his family in a good situation.

He sent a heartfelt thank you and he wrote “it doesn’t stop here... I want to give back.”

III – 94 year old WWII veteran “Sparky” and Purple Heart recipient

Support to him with visits and patronizing his Christmas tree business

Provide him with companionship and support with food and other services

Statistics and Highlights

My Brother Vinny – Since June 2013 assisted 728 veterans with 100% volunteer team. In the beginning of 2018 they had helped 520. Those assisted represent veterans in the Hudson Valley, NYC and Northern NJ.

Honor Flight – since 2011 have transported 1700 veterans.

Squirrelwood Equine – 31 veterans and their families have participated in their healing programs with 6 veterans and their families participating in weekly therapy.

Boxes for Soldiers – Program moved to May 2019 and will run through Memorial Day weekend. Each package will have Girl Scouts cookies.

Operation Cookie Drop – 108,000 cookies. Cookies distribution included Stewart Air Force Base, Stewart Honor Flight, and Veteran's Food Pantry.

VETERAN SERVICE AND COUNTY UPDATES:

- **Dutchess County** – not in attendance
- **Orange County**
 - **VSO: Christian Farrell, Director - Orange County Veteran Services**
 - Middletown Elks club's project realized 40 backpacks and 50 sleeping bags.
 - This Saturday National Wreaths Across America at cemetery at noon.
 - No veteran is ever forgotten. Goal wreaths at every grave.
 - Thursday an escort for tractor trailer with wreaths
 - **Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator** –
- **Putnam County**
 - **VSO: Karl Rohde, Director, Putnam County Veterans Service Agency**
 - Veteran with 12 year old grandson sleeping in car due to furnace issues.
 - Facilitated by request of assistance and a brand new furnace was delivered and installation services were donated in kind.
 - \$2700 was collected and the cost was \$450. Funds necessary were use and leftover funds were given to the Vet2Vet fund
 - Veteran claims are up
 - Veteran that tree came down on his home will finally receive assistance just in time for Christmas.
 - **Vet2Vet:**
 - One veteran at a time, motto
 - Backpack program has been Putnamized
 - Annual Gala a success
 - Boats for veterans are providing another boat
 - A veteran is helping another veteran to AA.
- **Rockland County**
 - **Vet to Vet: Ismael (Izzy) Quintana Jr., Veteran Outreach Coordinator**
 - For Thanksgiving, Vet to Vet assisted Veteran Angels of Hope with delivering 250 turkeys.
 - Will be also doing it for Christmas
 - November 27 Dwyer program mentor luncheon and graduation
 - Acupuncture program continues monthly
 - Adding monthly yoga on 3rd monthly
 - VSA and JP Dwyer program Holiday Party at American Legion Post in New City
- **Sullivan County**
 - **VSO: Howie Goldsmith, Coordinator, Sullivan County Veteran Service Agency and Sullivan County Veteran Alliance**
 - Later in November, a 56 year old veteran passed. Veteran Coalition assisted the family with food, turkey and a \$500 gift card. His widow was given a total of \$850 for the holidays.
- **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney**

- Cullen Lyons/Khristian Silvis, Veteran and Military Advocate
 - Not as active because of the campaign season.
 - Wrap up of year
 - 300 veteran and military cases
 - 79 medals and 3 Purple Heart Medals reunited
 - 49 service academy application

2019: What lies ahead?

Ideas for new direction/Issues to address

- Transportation is a huge issue and possibly the biggest problem
 - Requests/needs
 - Many don't have cars
 - Have cars in need of repairs
 - Some have cars but in need funds for registration or insurance
 - Homebound need to get to appointments (non-ambulatory)
 - Estimate 50% facilitator's time is used on transportation
 - Possible Solutions
 - Come up with a comprehensive plan
 - Networking to provide the services
 - Using volunteers
 - Donation of ambulances
 - County transportation to Castle Point and Albany
- Legislation for veterans
 - Dwyer may be losing funding
 - Awareness for veteran health related problems due to service in certain regions

Larry asked to think of ideas for 2019 to bring to the next meeting

Howie asked that we express our thank you to Larry Neumann and Christian Farrell for their leadership.

Adjournment: meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am by Larry Neumann.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 9, 2019, 9am

Location: Dept. of Mental Health, 30 Harriman Drive, Goshen

Minutes taken and typed by: Millie Rivera-Velez

Minutes reviewed and submitted by: Larry Neumann