

Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting

Minutes/Notes from January 9, 2019

OPENING: The HVTF meeting was called to order approx. 9:10 am on Weds. Jan. 9, 2019, at the Department of Mental Health, 30 Harriman Drive, Goshen, NY, by Larry Neumann. Larry led participants in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed all. Larry read the Task Force Mission Statement and thanked everyone for participating in that mission.

PRESENT: Numerous veteran and service agencies serving Orange, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland & Sullivan Counties were represented. Guests and Presenters are listed below. There was a total of 39 in attendance.

INTRODUCTIONS, opening remarks & review of last month's meeting: Larry started the meeting with introductions of the guest speakers on the agenda: Alison Bergmann, Heart of the Hudson Girl Scout Council (Operation Cookie Drop) and Steven Renna (The Committee for Families of War Veterans). Not present was Susan Hope Fogel of the Veteran Arts Institute. Larry then gave Alison Bergmann the floor.

GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS:

Alison Bergmann- Coordinator, Operation Cookie Drop: This program began in 2002 as Cookies for Soldiers. Scouts solicit cookie donations by asking if donors would like to give a box to a soldier. Alison is responsible for distributing donated cookies to our military including active duty, local vet programs, vet food pantries and VA hospitals. Christian Farrell expressed his appreciation for the cookies that have been donated to the OC Veterans' Food Pantry. Alison is seeking additional Hudson Valley programs through which she can disburse cookies. In 2018, Operation Cookie Drop reached the one-million-boxes-of-cookies-donated mark.

Steve Renna- The Committee for Families of War Veterans: Christian Farrell spoke briefly about the purpose of helping veterans in crisis and introduced Steve Renna. Steve spoke about the goals of CFFOVV: to get vets back on their feet and to get them to be self-sufficient. He stressed the need for financial stability and said that his organization will help pay a bill(s) to get vets out of a financial hole or through a difficult time. The program is based in Garnerville (Rockland). Vets seeking help apply for funds through a website (familiesofwarveterans.org) or call 800-221-4742. A DD214 will be required. Each vet's case goes before a board for approval. Turnaround time is approximately 2-3 days. Hudson Valley Veterans, Reservists, National Guard and widows are all eligible; some from PA and NJ may apply as well. Funds are grants, not loans. The program is supported financially by Shop-Rite. Steve estimated that over 300 veterans are assisted annually.

Task Force Homeless Case Status:

- WestCOP, Newburgh- Tanisha Terry
15 homeless vets that are known, have been referred to appropriate offices

- Dutchess County, 6: (4) shelter, (1) car, (1) hotel, (1) accepted into housing
- Orange County, 7: (2) shelter, (5) hotel
- Sullivan County, 1: (1) new referral needing medical care

VETERAN SERVICE & COUNTY UPDATES:

- **Dutchess County:** Rep not present.
 - Larry stated that Dutchess received a \$100K grant to help with Veterans' Housing needs.
 - A car dealership donated four cars to help with local vets' transportation needs.
- **Orange County:**
 - Christian Farrell - Director, Orange County Veteran Services**
 - Christian thanked everyone for participation in Wreaths Across America on 12/15/18
 - Over 1,000 people participated in laying 3500 wreaths on gravesites
 - OC Veterans had over 200 passings in 2018, busiest cemetery in OC
 - The Cemetery has hired a Master Planner to create plans for future enhancement.
 - OC Executive Steven Neuhaus, a Navy Seabee, has been deployed.
 - Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator**
 - Vets Arts has restarted their music workshop. Tai Chi is also being offered.
 - Nov.- Dec. there have been many calls with financial hardships and a rise in requests for assistance with food.
 - Veterans Task Force is expanding quickly. Larry is pleased with the level of support.
- **Putnam County:**
 - Karl Rhode, Director, Putnam County Veterans Service Agency**
 - Evening hours are now available on Tuesday from 5-8 pm, necessary for younger vets. Vets need to be taught how to navigate the [VA] system.
 - Suicide prevention funding may be available soon.
- **Rockland County:**
 - Vet2Vet, Ismael (Izzy) Quintana Jr., Veteran Outreach Coordinator**
 - Two new programs coming: Peer supervision program every 2nd Saturday & program of self-care & support with 12 core competencies. Sharon Bailey, LCSW, sbailey@vet2vetrc.org
 - Two monthly programs: on the 1st Saturday, 9-11 am, Acupuncture followed by social time and luncheon; every 3rd Friday, 11-12, Yoga, followed by social time and luncheon.
 - Feb. 6th, Weds., 10:30 am, Vet2Vet food and beverage reception at RCC Ellipse Center
- **Sullivan County: Rep not present**
 - Howie Goldsmith is receiving medical treatment

- **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney, Khristian Silvis, Veteran & Military Advocate**

Valentines for Vets coming up. Maloney's office is looking for ways to distribute the Valentines.

- Khristian is looking for resources to help Robert & Frank Giordano who have purchased a home in Orange County and want to convert it to a home for homeless vets. Izzy suggested John Murphy with home4heroes.com out of Rockland.

- **UPCOMING EVENTS/ROUNDTABLE**

- **Rick Walls, founder of Towns4Troops** thanked everyone who supported their stocking stuffer initiative. Provided 722 stuffed stockings to our military in the area. Compiled 50 Rack Packs & 50 additional packs for attendees of Poughkeepsie soldier's funeral.
- **Marc Cavalli, Founder, Joint Task Force 22 to Zero**, spoke about the stigma of attempted suicide. Looking to expand their program, find those in service in need of suicide prevention help, especially first responders. www.jtf22to0.com
- Michael Bark, OC Youth Dept., Goshen, serving youth & families in OC, including military families. Providing recreation, after school programs, internships, job readiness.
- **John Cameron** - The VA has adopted Dr. Frank Bourke's PTSD Treatment Protocol after a 2-year study done on the eradication of RTM. Over 90% of tested veterans were symptom free of flashbacks, hyper vigilance etc. They're working to get Cuomo to have physicians use the proven protocol when treating vets.
- **Monique Duci, Meeting Tree Computer**, is accepting gently used computers (laptops & desktops with screens) for refurbishment. The equipment will be given to local vet programs. Equipment should be no more than 4-5 years old and able to run Windows 7 or better. 845-237-2117, mduci@meetingtreecomputer.com
- **Bill Sestrom, Hudson Valley Honor Flight**, still looking for vets for two upcoming flights: 4/13 out of Stewart; 5/11 out of Westchester. Priority goes to WWII vets, Korean & Viet Nam vets (terminal). Contact bill@orangecountyzone.com, 914-489-2700
- **HVVTF Website** is being worked on. Meeting Agendas, Minutes, and Calendar of Events should go live in early February. Resource list is being compiled for future inclusion, as requested by a majority of Task Force members. Kendall Kless is working on the list.
- **Pat Siano, NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)** offers free educational courses for vets and their families. Would like to bring the NAMI Homefront program (currently offered online) to Orange County. See namiorangenyny.org for more information.
- **James Eldridge, Middletown Vet Center, Veteran Outreach Program Specialist** thanked all for their response to a recent request for goods to help a Veteran family in need. Family or marital counseling is available at the Center. Vets can call Chris Rupp, 914-313-6469. Vets needing assistance with claims for VA benefits may call 845-321-7717 for info.
- **Citizen Preparedness Corps, through New York National Guard Captain Brett White**, offers a 90-minute presentation addressing preparation for, response to and recovery from a

disaster situation of any type. If you're interested in having this presentation for your group/organization, contact Capt. White. 914-944-6509 or brett.m.white.mil@mail.mil.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 13th, 9:00 – 11:00am

Location: Dept. of Mental Health, Melville Conference Room, 30 Harriman Drive, Goshen, NY