



Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting Minutes/Notes of June 12, 2019

FINAL

OPENING: The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:15 am on Wednesday, June 12, 2019 at the Orange County Department of Health, 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, Sullivan, Rockland, and Putnam Counties were represented. Dutchess County representation was not present. The guests/presenters are listed below. There were a total of 32 in attendance.

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

Larry started the meeting with a recap of the May 8th meeting. Reminded and reviewed last month's speakers with the highlights of their events and services together with their upcoming dates. He reviewed last month's homeless veteran count.

Larry started the meeting discussing the Summer P-I-T (Point In Time) homeless count. The importance of having one during the warm weather as many of the camps are active, unlike during the Winter. He showed pictures of the sites they came across while conducting the PIT count. The count was performed over a three day period in Orange County, including AM and PM teams in each of the three major cities. Police escorts were provided throughout the count. Several homeless people were identified with many 'lining up' to get interviewed and to receive bags of food. At the camps, syringes were often found indicating intravenous drug use. Found several locations where homeless were found and several locations that were empty but show evidence of recent habitation. The Salvation Army Soup Kitchens in the major cities revealed the most homeless people in one location. At least four new or previously unknown homeless veterans were identified. Of these, one stated he was not "homeless" but "houseless" and he preferred to live in his vehicle. A veteran in Middletown was very angry, refused to participate in the survey, indicating that none of the agencies he had worked with were able to help him.

Larry thanked Anthony Desjardin, who, as a school project for Chester Academy delivered 38 boxes designed for homeless veterans which included necessary and personal hygiene items, including; water, food, socks toothbrush toothpaste, etc. Anthony had sought information on what was needed from Veteran Task Force members, so the boxes contained items known to be of use. Thoughtfully, he also created special boxes, specifically for women.

Larry also spoke about Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force member and prior United Way employee, Israel Benitez, who, at 26 year old, was recently diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor. He and his coworker, Sarah Donnatien partnered to educate the community on veteran issues. Israel has been given a diagnosis of 1 year. He had surgery to remove as much of the brain tumor as possible. Thoughts and prayers are with him during this difficult time. Larry read a letter written by coworker Sarah. A Go Fund Me page has been set up to seek donations to help offset medical expenses and cost of treatment. Israel updates his progress page. Larry will send the link to access the page. Larry then read the letter exchange between he and Israel showing the strong courage and positive attitude Israel maintains during this major change in his life.

Summer is a great time for baseball and Larry announced the 3rd Annual Veteran Appreciation Day scheduled for Saturday, August 31st. A very patriotic opening ceremony is planned which several treats, including the unfurling of a very large American Flag by the Boy Scouts of America and special logos and jerseys which will be worn (and auctioned off to benefit veteran causes) by the team! There is no cost to the veteran or their family members to attend! The all-inclusive day offers free parking, free admission, a free meal, a fireworks show and lots of give-aways from vendors and sponsors. Veterans should sign up NOW by contacting the Dutchess, Orange or Putnam County, Veteran Service Agency.

GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS

Mike and Ester McGarry:

Mike McGarry spoke for Ester who could not attend. Mike announced that the 20th Regiment Foundation, a newly formed 501c3, has funded a \$17,520 grant to Faith First Early Learning Center at Saint Columbia Church in Chester, NY. The grant is for 3 full time and 3 part-time children to attend the Preschool program. This grant is open to all enlisted members and their families, both active duty and veterans of the Armed Forces of The United States. The program will be administered by Father John Bonnici and supervised by Susan Munks, Director of Religious Education. Mike handed out applications which will be reviewed on a first come/first served basis. July 15th is the deadline for applications to be submitted.

Todd Macleod: Orange & Rockland Utilities

Todd promoted jobs available at O&R which have veteran preference. Current openings are for linemen so physical ability is important. Will be required to climb poles. Current job listing is located on their website (www.oru.com) with new jobs being posted from June 19th to June 26th. Veteran status will bring their resume to the top. Available are electrical, gas and tech jobs. There is also a Veteran Committee at Orange and Rockland.

Kathy Yusuf: Mount Saint Mary College

Kathy was scheduled to speak about military programs at MSMC, but was not present.

Laurie Bryceland, GAIT Therapeutic Riding Center:

Laurie introduced the GAIT program which is located in Milford, PA but is not limited by county or state borders. She showed a short film, which is available to view at their website, <http://gaittrc.org/>, which provided feedback about the program from three veterans who attended. The program is completely free through fundraisers and corporate sponsors. The program is also open to LEOs. Laurie handed out flyers and announced slots were still available for the upcoming 1-day retreats on Saturday, June 29th and Sunday, June 30th.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Kevin Keaveny: Founder of the Veterans Wooden Boat Project. Kevin began by describing combat veterans and spoke a little about the Wooden Boat Project and its inception. However, his purpose here today is to talk about a Hudson Valley project to bring resources to Ulster County. He seeks help from the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force to support his mission so that Ulster County veterans can benefit from the same services available in other counties, i.e.; Vet2Vet, MHA, etc. Interesting to note, that at the same time, Vet2Vet in Orange County is seeking to bring the Veteran Wooden Boat Project to Orange County. Vet2Vet Facilitator, Everett Cox has been in contact with the Newburgh Rowing Club to procure a space for the boat building to occur. Kevin went on to say that he has begun a 501c3 program to facilitate his goals. The HVVTF expressed its support.

Christina Novak of WestCOP: Hudson Valley Homeless Veteran Status Report

Began with some discussion to further promote the Spring PIT Count which was performed. Christina was an active participant in the count. Believes the count is more realistic in warmer months.

- **WestCOP SSVF: Open/New Case Report**
 - Dutchess - 4
 - Orange - 17
 - Ulster County - 0
 - Westchester - 43
 - Sullivan - 2

Focus is on the 17 homeless in Orange County, plus 8 street homeless veterans and linking them with services and resources.

General Announcement:

- Housing Resource Center (HRC) is moving out of 280 Broadway to two new locations in Newburgh and Middletown making access easier across the county.

VETERAN SERVICE AND COUNTY UPDATES:

- **Dutchess County, excused.** Location is distance prohibited
 - **Vet2Vet: Adam Roche, Program Manager, Vet2Vet Veterans' Peer Services**
- **Orange County**
 - **VSO: Christian Farrell, Director - Orange County Veteran Services**
 - Salute to Veterans Fireworks show coming to Thomas Bull Memorial Park. Gates open at 4pm. Call the VSO at 291-2464 for parking pass.
 - OC Vet Golf Open this Friday (Flag Day). Proceeds benefit Honor Flight. 80 golfers are returning this year.
 - Veteran, "Sparky" Anderson passed away. Sparky was an iconic veteran in the community known for selling Christmas Trees out of his garage during the holiday season. He is missed.
 - Flags are being flown at half-mast due to the Virginia shootings.
 - Steve Neuhaus is on his way back from deployment.
 - **Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator**
- **Putnam County**
 - **VSO: Karl Rohde, Director, Putnam County Veterans Service Agency**
 - Introduced Bob Blozzon who is with Vet2Vet Program.
 - Meeting with ShopRite on Friday to discuss fundraisers and no funds going to veterans in Putnam.
 - On July 17th, New York State Senate Veteran Advisory council meeting.
 - Recently helped a vet living in his car.
 - Received grant for Vet Suicide event, 6/19, see flyer.
 - Next Renegades game is next Monday and Sold Out.
 - After-hour services continue to be offered.
 - received.
- **Rockland County**
 - **Vet to Vet: Izzy Quintana**
 - 5/23 – Recycle Rides. Businesses support this program. Two vets got fixed up cars (1-O.C., 1-R.C.)
 - Outreach to Rockland PD. Going to their trainings. Bridges hired a peer for Veteran Justice. Also RPC to support vets getting released.

- Continuing with Alternative Therapy
- Baseball game this Friday, 6/14. A chair is being donated.
- 6/17 – Opening a satellite office. Grand opening of White Plains Vet Center offering Counseling Sessions and services. Open Monday & Tuesday, 11am-8:30pm. Office hours can expand to M-F based on utilization.
- **Sullivan County**
 - **VSO: Howie Goldsmith, Coordinator, Sullivan County Veteran Service Agency**
 - Memorial Day events were well attended.
 - Sad news: One of the veterans scheduled for Honor Flight has passed away.
 - Monster Run flyers were handed out.
 - Action Towards Independence: Operation Wellness Day, August 24th. See flyer.
 - VA scheduled for Town Hall meeting on June 19th at Sullivan Gov't Center.
 - Vietnam Travelling Wall: Sept. 10th.
 - **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney.**
 - Service Academy Reception – This Friday.
 - 15 accepted, 8 female.
 - Friday is the Army's Birthday!
 - Why Hire Vets Event. Newburgh Free Library 6/14
 - Blue Water Navy
 - Purple Heart Coin Act

UPCOMING EVENTS/ROUNDTABLE

Andy Finnigan – Am Vets last year on Flag Day, retired over 1500 flags. VFW 973 has a mail box to accept retired flags.

Towns For Troops – Rick Walls – Truck load of Girl Scout Cookies.

Christine Bruckner – First group out.

Kim Mahoney-Middletown ELKS – See Flyer. ELKS for Vets Golf: August 24th.

James Eldridge- Middletown Vets Center- Open House 6/10.

Sarah Donnatien- United Way- June 29th event/fundraiser, Pull a 747 at Steward Airport. 6/21: Free community health screenings in Poughkeepsie. Hudson River Healthcare.

My Brother Vinny: 848 Veterans served. All volunteer program.

Shara-LSHV: Veteran legal services to continue. Funding received. New lawyer hired. There are now 2 attorneys for veterans and their families in Orange County.

Bill Sestrom: Honor Flight: See flyer for dates of all the upcoming events. 7/27: Jimmy Sturr concert at Goshen Track. Mission #24 out of Stewart on 10/12/19.

Monique Ducci: Meeting Tree Computer: Computers for Veterans Project: Six computers are available for veterans. Four are already committed. Monitors, mice and keyboards needed.

Bob Blozzon: Putnam Vet2Vet: Vets United Program in Putnam: Saturday morning and Thursday evening. Also; outreach. 2-day course to get leadership training.

Laurie Bryceland: GAIT: 6/25: Operation SAVE. Presentation by VA Suicide Prevention followed by panel discussion. Interested in creating Veteran Task Force in NE Pennsylvania.

2019 INITIATIVES

Initiatives were not reviewed due to time limitations. All initiatives resulting from the needs assessment are being addressed in various forms by team members.

Adjournment: meeting was adjourned at 11:55am by Larry Neumann.

Next meeting: Wednesday, July 10th, 2019, 9am

Location: 30 Harriman Drive, Goshen, NY

Minutes taken by: Angela Jo Henze

Minutes reviewed and submitted by: Larry Neumann