



**FINAL**

## **Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting Minutes/Notes of August 14, 2019**

**OPENING:** The meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force was called to order at 9:20 am on Wednesday, August 14, 2019 at the Unity Center, Newburgh, NY by Larry Neumann. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**PRESENT:** Many veteran and human service agencies of Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster Counties were represented. There was a total of 50 in attendance.

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

Larry spoke of the end of the summer and how for him it is September 1st. Summer ends makes him think of the homeless; especially those in tents at camps or woods. Before we know it, the warming stations will be opening. He asked that those present give their donations to them and not boxes on the side of the road. Also, remember to support the stand down events.

Larry shared some great things that have happened since we last met. A request was made to the group for a young veteran who needed a bicycle to get to work. We were able to get a very nice bike from Frank Pusatere. This veteran also needed tools which were purchased by Vet2Vet. He is doing very well with his new job. Another request was fulfilled by My Brother Vinny, who came through with two air conditioners. One went to a woman veteran with a lot of health issues and her young school aged daughter. The 2nd went to a Vietnam veteran. The program also provided 2 bags of bathroom supplies that included towels.

Irving Abrahamson had a bad roof leak in his mobile home. The roof was scheduled to be repaired when they realized that the floors became warped and dangerous. They needed to raise an additional \$2,100 to repair the damaged floors. \$500 of \$2,100 needed was donated by Margie Gaffney of the American Legion 488 in Monroe. Everyone came through. Larry expressed his appreciation.

Larry Introduced guests and welcomed them. He then introduced our presenters. He also extended another invitation to the Veteran Appreciation Day - a very special event. He announced this year's new and special items - the unfurling a very large flag as part of the opening ceremony, and the Renegades changing their name for the one day to the Hudson Valley Veterans. They are celebrating by wearing camouflage gear that will be auctioned to benefit Joseph P. Dwyer Vet2Vet Programs.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS**

#### **Bob & Patsy Boisvert, Treasurer, Patriot Guard Riders of New York: Help on the Homefront:**

Started in 2005, when a veteran's family was being harassed by a group that was making it difficult for the family to bury their veteran. The Patriot Guards must be invited by the family and they only provide what the family requests of them. They provide an honor guard and security for veterans' funerals. Bob is the senior ride captain for region 6 of the Patriot Guard Riders of New York. He showed a slide presentation - they carry large flags. If the family requests the casket not be visible, they stand side by side, so the flags shield the casket. Their group is organized and incorporated as a non-profit with a board of directors. They are a stand-alone organization and do not get funding from outside sources. A few years ago, a young soldier, Sean Farrell was coming home at the end of his life. They escorted him from Stewart Airport passed the high school he attended then escorted the casket to the funeral

services held at Skateland. It was a large undertaking with many involved and a large police presence and support.

The program also supports police, firefighters and other first responders for their final services. They realized that many families do not claim their veterans from funeral homes fearing the cost. In NYS, funeral homes need to release the ashes of a veteran without a charge. The PGR facilitate the release of ashes to the family. Once a year, they have a memorial service with full honors for reclaimed ashes. It is held in Saratoga.

**Help on the Homefront:** The two main services provided to qualifying veterans - furniture program and monetary assistance. Established and primarily in upstate in New York. The financial assistance program is primarily a bill paying assistance - utilities, car, food in special situations. It is a one-time assistance program. Since they began this service, they have assisted with approximately \$300,000. The furniture program is one room of furniture for veterans going to new housing from homelessness. They partner with Raymour & Flanigan which delivers the furniture. One main requirement is that the Veteran be present at delivery. The choices are bedroom or living room. Program qualification shown presentation slide - the hardest part of this process is the application process. Their primary goal is to get the program downstate and expand the regions of veterans they can serve.

*Questions?* Christian Farrell asked, is everything online or is there a number they can call? They can go the website PGRNY.com. Should email for more information. A veteran with a dishonorable discharge does not qualify.

Karl Rhode commented that referred veteran usually have been verified by their agency. Does that make a difference? The proof needed is the DD-214. The understanding is the veteran can get a printout from the VA. Nicole Embry - VA can prove veteran status but cannot give a printout. Christine Novak, SSVF/WestCOP - we have most of the documentation at their agency. Do you have a release of information? They do not have currently. This is a new program.

**Introduction of the Hudson Valley Task Force** by Larry felt it would be helpful to reiterate the origin story and reviewed the mission statement.

**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.***

Showed a cartoon, "why are so many of the brave homeless."

Larry requested support for Tommy's walk across America for veteran homelessness awareness. Invited the group to join him walking the last mile on the 23rd of August in Poughkeepsie. Homelessness is not their only issues. Slide show - member list, instrumental organizations, introduced some of these organizations.

**Nicole Embry, Outreach Coordinator, VA healthcare: Town Hall Meetings**

Larry introduced Nicole and the many Town hall meetings that have been initialized in many of the counties. Nicole reported that on average had 20/30 attendees. At them, they discussed issues of veterans. One main issue being transportation. The VA is looking at the needs and are working hard to

address these issues. Hoping to provide more services at their annexes. At the meetings, there were many questions about the claims process; getting appointments closer and not having to travel so far for appointments. One priority is making the facilities much more welcoming. She is taking the feedback and hopefully will have updates in the next few months. The Mission Act was discussed. She explained the Choice program - which allows a veteran to see outside doctors and the VA will pay. Nicole stated, "this is not the case." One can go to an urgent care but must be a preferred location. There are special factors about mileage and condition attached to this service. It is also for specialty treatment that is not provided by the VA. Larry - DAV transportation is available. Nicole - Looking to expand the program. Drivers must meet rigorous application process. The task force has discussed getting legislation for these transportation issues. One such suggestion was for money allocated for the individual veterans can be given to agencies providing transportation.

### **Millie Rivera-Velez, Facilitator Vet2Vet: Women Veteran Census**

Introduction - She introduced the She's Counted; They're Counted women veteran census for Orange County and requested the groups assistance when it is launched. Larry read the press release to provide a picture of the project.

### **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

#### **Bob Willis: God and Country Veterans Living History Event, November 2, Kingston, NY**

A 2-day event. Honor God and Honor a veteran. The program has 10 combat veterans from WWII to today. They have history events at the school and bring veterans. It starts with an assembly where the veterans will introduce themselves, and during the second period, they go into classes where each veteran tells of their experiences. November 2nd event will celebrate the veterans and share their stories. Bob invited all to attend the celebration dinner that evening.

**Kevin Keaveny: HVCVR** - Started with wooden boat program for veterans. He has another event to help veterans with other integration services. They partnered with Toyota to provide 50 veterans high quality training, services and laptops. The Kiwanis in Saugerties, NY assisting with this program to focus on homeless veterans. To register, he requests name and branch of service.

### **Special Guests:**

Melissa Spicer, Bill Smullen, Alexander Behm, Ryan Woodruff, Kate Hannon, Lance Stendfelt, Chris Griffin, Lynn Fox: Clear Path for Veterans - Chittenago, NY - thank you for being here.

Jane Zalksy: NYS Division of Veteran Services, not present

David Allis: All American Homes, LLC

Bill Forte: Chairman, Kingston Veteran Association

Charles Manfro: Past Commander American Legion Post 150, Kingston

### **TASK FORCE HOMELESS CASES Status: Christine Novak**

Christine Novak thanked the agencies that have continued to meet and provide the information for the homeless count.

- **WestCOP SSVF: Open/New Case Report**
  - Dutchess - 4
  - Orange - 18
  - Ulster County - no count

- Westchester - 28
- Sullivan - 3

All agencies are working and meeting bi-weekly or weekly to get a true count. Hope and goal are to have information on all homeless to be ready to serve them when they decide to come in. Does Putnam have its own number? Usually grouped together with Westchester.

Christina Novak of WestCOP report on the status on Veteran Unity Center.

Last week the purple heart ceremony - flew in 13 purple heart recipients. The heroes were taken to West Point and spent 2 days. On October 2nd - Purple Heart dinner. The guest speakers will be David Perkins and Meghan Dunleavy

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

- **Dutchess County, excused.**
  - **Vet2Vet: Adam Roche, Program Manager, Vet2Vet Veterans' Peer Services**
  - On September 16th 6 to 8 Town Hall. More information: 845-486-2060
  - Stand down in November
- **Orange County**
  - **VSO: Christian Farrell, Director - Orange County Veteran Services**
  - September 28th Stand Down event, Elks Club, Middletown, NY
  - September 29th Orange County Memorial Day - 41 Orange County residents who died in WWI
  - **Vet2Vet: Larry Neumann, Program Coordinator**
- **Putnam County**
  - **VSO: Karl Rohde, Director, Putnam County Veterans Service Agency**
    - More involved with Equine therapy. Has become a horse handler.
    - Safe Talk training. Non- clinical training on veteran issues.
  - **Vet2Vet, John Bourges, Program Coordinator**
    - Saturday open house at Pegasus Stables
    - Change a concept - eliminate the barriers and promote programs and be able to work together. Like the warm line. The Women Veteran of Hudson Valley have begun meeting and removed the barriers.
    - 22 suicides a day. It is not the VA issue it is a us issue. SafeTalk will help with the training.
- **Rockland County**
  - **Vet to Vet: Sharon Bailey - notes read by Larry Neumann**
    - homeless situation. Hotels, voucher for food, and then got housing.
    - Homeless vet living in storage unit - bad conduct discharge got him a care manager, job and home.
    - Very involved with police and Justice for veterans
    - Partnered with a retired police detective, has a monthly support group completely confidential for first responders
    - Writing Workshop - weekly Wednesdays
    - Hudson valley veteran picnic - call Sharon Bailey
- **Sullivan County**
  - **VSO: Howie Goldsmith, Coordinator, Sullivan County Veteran Service Agency**

- September 10th receiving Vietnam Wall at Woodbine to Rock Hill. Looking for motorcycle riders. September 11th joint services and speakers, Karl Rhode
- VA Town Hall meeting
- October 11 Stand Down - organization participation
- **Ulster County**
  - **Bill Forte, Veteran Alliance**
    - Spoke of the movie "Why Can't We Serve" looking for assistance with getting information
    - Veteran Luncheon September 12
- **Office of US Representative Sean Patrick Maloney. excused**

Before closing, Larry presented the Clear Path group with special bags as a thank you for their participation.

#### **2019 INITIATIVES**

**Adjournment:** the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am by Larry Neumann.

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, September 11, 2019, 9am Location: TBD

Minutes taken and typed by Millie Rivera-Velez

Minutes reviewed and submitted by Larry Neumann