

March 2022 Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force Meeting Notes

Welcome

Good morning everyone. I first want to welcome you all to the March 2022 meeting of the Hudson Valley Veteran Task Force. We are a group of over 350 people, representing over 100 veteran service providers, across seven counties in the Hudson Valley.

Our Mission is to address the needs of those who have 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 to meet their immediate and long-term needs.

SHOW PICTURE OF TEAM

One of the ways we do that is by participating in the annual HUD Point-In-Time Homeless Count which we did this past Friday with AM and PM teams in Port Jervis, Middletown and Newburgh for Orange County. I'm sure your county held a similar count. Most of the count comes from those who are in our Warming Stations, many of which are scheduled to close around the end of this month. Other than that, it is difficult to find homeless people outdoors in 20 degree weather. That's why we team with law enforcement, look in fast food places, libraries and other known hang-outs. To help get a better grasp on the homeless, we will do another count in the Summer when the encampments other outdoor locations are more populated. Thanks to all who participated in the count.

REVIEW OF LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Last month we met on Wednesday, February 9th. We had 11 guests and two presenters and approximately 63 attendees. Presenters included Ashley O'Leary and Ginelle of the BRAVE Adaptive Sports Program, part of the Burke Rehab Hospital program offerings. Ashley spoke about a Golf Clinic to be offered at West Point for those with a PTSD or TBI diagnosis. She also sent out a Letter of Support request recently as she is seeking VA funding in response to the VA-SPORTS-22 Adaptive Sports Grant Program with intent to address the limited availability of quality adaptive sports and activities for disabled veterans and members of the Armed Forces. I immediately sent her the letter she requested and I hope that you will too. Ashley, if there is a need for additional support letters, please let me know and I will send your requests to my extensive distribution list.

We also heard from Aaron Leonard of Guardian Revival via pre-taped video regarding their Outdoor Rx Program which seeks to make local, state and federal parks more accessible to veterans, as well as offering activities such as kayaking and hiking.

Now we turn our attention to this month, March of 2022. When I look back at where we were just 30 days ago, I can't believe how much things have changed in that short amount of time. Now our attention is on Ukraine. It is horrifying to watch as its citizens become refugees. It is enlightening to see their leader, President Zelensky take up defense of his country and its people in such a personal way. It is scary to watch as Putin acts in total disregard for the United Nations. It is scarier still to consider that this could become a nuclear war.

Those who know me, know that I believe war should be a very last resort. I am against war. The idea of the consequences of war on innocent people makes me sick. We here are all too familiar with another downside of war in the clients and veterans in our charge, who suffer as a result of the horrors they

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have witnessed. I pray that this invasion will be resolved peacefully and the citizens of Ukraine will be allowed to return to their homes and live free of tyranny and oppression.

I received many calls asking what can be done to help the Ukrainians. I would like to send you a link to an article from J. Heinrich Arnold, leader of the Bruderhof organization. I found it informative and very much in alignment with my own beliefs.

https://www.bruderhof.com/en/voices-blog/justice/peacemaking-in-wartime?utm_source=Bruderhof+English&utm_campaign=065086428e-BruderhofWeekly20210926_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_55cabf2d3f-065086428e-413276646

In it, he identifies some organizations to donate to what can help...

Save the Children <https://www.savethechildren.org/>

Samaritans Purse <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/>

Also consider;

International Rescue Committee <https://help.rescue.org/donate/ukraine>

UNICEF <https://www.unicefusa.org/>

Doctors without Borders <https://donate.doctorswithoutborders.org>

MARCH is...

Women's History Month. At this time I would like to recognize all of the women of this committee, who have served their country in uniform. Women have honorably served in the military for generations and continue to break barriers even today. The courage and determination of all women who serve or have served provides a leading light to other women during their journeys in the military – and beyond. After service, women Veterans use the skills and experiences they gained in the military to achieve milestones in their careers, contribute to their communities, and become leaders across industries.

Celebrate Women's History Month with the VA at... <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>

They have a great presentation on the history of women in the military. I wish we had the time to review it in more detail, but we must move on if we are to stay on schedule.

In addition, Kristen Rouse, Deputy Director for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion for the NYS Div. of Veteran Services, invites you to attend their upcoming virtual program in honor of Women's History Month:

Women Veterans Getting Their Due: A Women's History Month Conversation with New York State Veterans' Services

Tuesday, March 15, 12:00-1:30 PM ET

Register via Zoom: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Yt5EKDBYt8q4s9qy-dA1Mw

In this virtual event we'll hear from Elizabeth Estabrooks, Deputy Director of the VA Center for Women Veterans, on the latest in services and benefits for women veterans. We'll also hear from women veteran leaders across New York on the challenges women veterans have faced in accessing benefits and services, and how we can continue to improve services for this fastest-growing population of

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veterans. Plus we will take your questions.

Speakers will include:

Elizabeth Estabrooks, U.S. Army Veteran, Deputy Director, VA Center for Women Veterans
Sharon Bailey, U.S. Army and Air Force Veteran, Veteran Outreach Administrator, PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Vet to Vet Program at BRIDGES in Rockland County
Tracy LoTemple, U.S. Navy Veteran, Director of Veteran Services, CompeerCORPS
Lynn Magistrale, U.S. Navy and Air Force Veteran, Program Coordinator, WNY Heroes
Andrea Molina, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran, Director of Veteran Services/Vet2Vet, Family Services of Westchester

It is also... Navy Reserves Birthday (3/3), Seabee Birthday (3/5), K-9 Veterans Day (3/9), American Legion Birthday (3/15), St. Patrick's Day (3/17), Rosie the Riveter Day (3/21), Medal of Honor Day (3/25), Vietnam Veterans Day (3/29)

At this time I would like to welcome our Special Guests and New Members;

Jamie Cevetillo is a CASAC-II and the Resource Coordinator for the Middletown City Drug Treatment Court. Middletown is in the process of implementing a Veteran Treatment Track to its Drug Treatment Court and we stand ready to assist with our Dwyer Peer Mentoring Program to aid veterans as they navigate this transitional phase in their lives. We look forward to a mutually rewarding program.

Benjamin Tisdale was introduced to us by Melissa Clark of United Way of Orange and Dutchess. He is the Governor of the Tri-State Chapter of Alpha Omega Phi, a fraternity which supports veterans in 5 states including NY. He is based in Wappingers.

Susan (Assunta) Vitti – Susan is a Clinical Psychologist and Director of the Psychology Pre-Doctoral Internship Program with the VA. She is also the Suicide Prevention Coordinator and REACH Vet Coordinator at Montrose VA. Susan, I assume you already know Carl LoFaro who has really moved the ball forward with our suicide prevention programs. I'm sure we will be working together closely.

Lois-Lachel Migkins, Lois is with NAAM House Initiative, Inc. who's main office is on Staten Island. They are a veteran owned and designed to help chronically ill Disabled Veterans access to housing, respect, advocacy to attain adequate medical diagnosis and treatment, everyday life skills, and help to mitigate the circumstances leading to recurrent homelessness. Lois, you are among friends here, and we look forward to learning more about NAAM House at a future meeting.

And finally, Dr. Beatrice Krauss. Beatrice was referred to us by George Frazier of Hoops Express. She is a health psychologist who also plays harp. She is finishing a certification to be a Therapeutic Musician. She states; I have been playing harp once a week at a hospice here in Tucson. Although we therapeutic musicians have lists of popular songs by age, we have no such list for veterans. Also, we often do honor ceremonies (which I believe are very much akin to our "Final Salute to Veterans" program as practiced by our area Hospice Programs) and play what we "think" vets would like in the background. I have a 10-20 minute on-line survey with music clips for two purposes: 1) what is calming, what is the go-to music for vets of various ages, and do they find several tunes I have been using to be calming?; 2) what would they want played at an honor service..... the anthem of their service branch? America the Beautiful? The Star Spangled Banner? I've found so far that this varies by service branch. To achieve stable results, I

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need about 10-20 more responses to my survey. I have already transcribed the service anthems for small portable harp and recorded them so that vets can listen on-line and indicate what they would want played.

Here is a link to the survey. Please complete the survey if you are able and feel free to forward it to your distribution lists.

How do I participate in Dr. Beatrice Krauss' Veteran Music Survey? Click on this link to start the survey:
https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56i1CzmAzStGARw

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go to <https://list.arizona.edu/sympa/info/egad>

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and click Subscribe in the left hand column
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And now for our Presenters today.

First is Jessica Cohen, Managing Editor of Strauss News. Strauss News is actually a conglomerate of several local news sources, one of which you are probably familiar with for your location. Jessica seeks to put her finger on the pulse of the veteran community and report on the stories that are important to us.

Shawn Walton, Veteran Services Officer, NYS Division of Veteran Services. Shawn hails from Brooklyn and along with Benjamin Pomerance, Deputy Director for Program Development for the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs, has been very busy with the NYS Homeless Veterans Outreach effort. If you weren't able to attend the recent Homeless Veterans Webinar, you missed a good one.

David Noble and Maureen Dahms, with Home Depot. Home Depot is hiring and they have a Military Careers Program. Here to tell us more about it is David and Maureen.

Ed Reid, Vet Zero Transportation Program. Ed, transportation, as you see further down the list of our priorities, has been a sticking point for us all along. For the transportation services that are available, there always seems to be some shortcoming that keeps it from working for the veteran. Either the services doesn't go where the veteran needs to be, or operates outside of the time the veteran's appointment is. Vet Zero seems to have circumnavigated all of these issues and is providing real transportation services when needed. I have even known you to come from Poughkeepsie to Port Jervis to transport a veteran, which is very much appreciated, but obviously not sustainable. Please tell us more about the program and what is a reasonable expectation for outlying counties.

Jerome Kleiman is planning the 80th Anniversary of Bataan Death March. The Memorial Event is taking place on Saturday, April 9th at Bataan Road in Orangeburg, NY. For those, like myself, who may not be familiar with this historic event, I yield to Jerome for a quick history lesson and an explanation as to why it is so important.

Thank you to all of our presenters today. It never ceases to amaze me that even 8 years later, we are still learning new things about veteran events, programs and services. It once again reminds me of how

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important it is to centralize this information and make possible for those seeking services to find us, as well as increasing our ability to find each other. Again, I thank you all for your wonderful presentations.

Here is the contact information for all of our presenters today...

Jessica Cohen
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Warwick Advertiser
The Chronicle
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Here is the info related to the recent webinar, focusing on federal and state benefits, programs, and services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families.

Attached, are the slides from this webinar. Also attached is the current New York State Division of Veterans' Services Directory, where you can find the contact information for our accredited Veterans Benefits Advisors who work within your particular area of operations.

Here is the link to the recording from the program:

<https://meetny.webex.com/recording-service/sites/meetny/recording/4b7a280c7d52103abe8f0050568c1b23/playback>

Respectfully,
Benjamin Pomerance, Esq.
Deputy Director for Program Development
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Ed Reid

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Need phone number

Bataan Death March Memorial Event

<https://rememberbataan.org/>

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ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SHOUT OUTS!

Once again we thank Gavin Walters of Ulster County Dwyer and the HVCVR. Gavin has led a statewide coalition of all existing Dwyer programs and gotten us attention to address some important issues, most notably, giving the program needed recognition at the State level and making the program a permanent line item on the State budget. His efforts don't stop there. He recently got us audience with Senator John Brooks, Assemblywoman Didi Barrett and several NYS Legislators and County Executives. To give us an update, here's Gavin...

Chris Holshek – Blessing of the Bikes Ceremony

Sharon Toney-Finch – Montgomery Veterans Home

Bill Whetsel – Rumshock Veteran Foundation Updates

Veteran Laptop Program update

Izzy/Sharon: Military Behavioral Health Training Class

Before we move on, does anyone else have any information to share?

Priorities:

Housing

Transportation

Resource Database.