



SARATOGA COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY
152 West High St., Ballston Spa, NY 12020

SC-VSA

April 28th, 2013

Executive Summary, Saratoga County, Veterans' Service Agency (VSA)

Subject: Events and Activities Summary for April 21st through April 27th, 2013.

Executive Summary Intent: The purpose of this document is to provide situational awareness and understanding to subordinate and adjacent leaders and staff of the Veterans' Service Agency (VSA). This document does not by itself dictate official policy or decision.

Mission: To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans.

Vision: We will accomplish this by providing quality service, advocacy and counseling for the Veterans of Saratoga County Veteran and their families. In coordination with, other Saratoga county departments, non-government organizations, community based partners and affiliates will make sure our Veterans receive the right services, external assistance and benefits through outreach. The most essential portion of our charter is to ensure that our Veterans, especially those we come in contact with, are treated professionally with dignity and respect.

Veterans Service Agency (VSA) Priorities of Effort.

- Veterans Self Sufficiency. Develop a sustainable initiatives where Veterans are able to become self sufficient through the collaborative effort of the Saratoga County Veterans Employment Task Force.
- Veterans Justice Outreach. Develop a program in support of the VA Veterans Justice Outreach in order to provide advocacy and assistance to Veterans in lieu of incarceration or upon release.
- Veterans Peer to Peer Support Program. Develop a cadre of veterans who understand coping with and overcoming the psychological trauma experienced during intense armed conflict. The Veteran lead program will offer will provide training and guidance by professional therapists and facilitators. The Veteran mentors are dedicated to helping their fellow veterans make the necessary adjustments back to day-to-day life.
- Veterans Benefits Outreach initiative. Develop a program where a Veteran's Service Officer deploys to the cities and towns of Veterans unable to travel to the VSA in order to reduce the risk of these Veterans not receiving the deserved services and benefits.
- Veterans Trust Fund Initiative. Plan, coordinate and execute social events in order to promote our Veterans and raise money for our Veterans Trust fund.
- Saratoga County Veterans Alliance. Establish an Alliance of Veterans that are business or community leaders in order to mass our collective resources and abilities on targeted veterans issues introduced to the Alliance.

Summary:

1. Meeting with Elizabeth Donovan. On April 22nd 2013, I met with Elizabeth Donovan, LCSWR, Local Recovery Coordinator, Stratton VA Medical Center in order to discuss the Teams' Priority of Efforts.
 - a. We discussed ways to reduce the amount of Veterans that are isolated, either by choice or by coincidence. I believe that by having our Veteran Service Officer (Frank) deploy to the areas where our Veterans will easily frequent will create some access to these folks.
 - b. The Peer to Peer program needs Veterans "Out Front" leading the way. Over the course of many years a Marine or Soldier relied on his/her peers to get them to the objective. Today, the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen are still the same and now is the time to for former service members to step back in and re-assume a leadership role.
 - c. We need to continue to focus energy and resources on the family members to help identify potential participants to the Peer to Peer program through the Yellow Ribbon Events, and the Blue Star Mothers.
2. Saratoga County Veterans Employment Task Force. The group met on April 22nd, 2013 and received a Veterans Employment Briefing from Daniel Perkins, Veterans Employment Specialist (DVOP), New York State Department of Labor.
 - a. The basis of his brief and discussion were the following questions:
 - ✓ What is preventing Veterans from finding meaningful employment?
 - ✓ Are Veterans aware of all available resources?
 - ✓ Does the generally high unemployment rate increase in an existing employable problem with Veterans? (Danny Perkins)
 - ✓ What is the age group of Veterans most affected by unemployment? (Danny Perkins)
 - ✓ Do Veterans impede their own progress?
 - ✓ Do businesses buy into what Veterans bring to the table to them? (Danny Perkins)
 - ✓ Are there mandates/obligations in Saratoga County to hire Veterans? (Danny Perkins)
 - ✓ Do employers get credit for hiring a Veteran? (Danny Perkins)
 - ✓ What does the *Jobs for Veterans initiative* entail? (State)
 - b. The profile of the unemployed Veteran for Saratoga County is a person who is 45 years old or older, and was on active duty in a middle management to upper management role.
 - 1) This person has difficulty keeping up with current trends.
 - 2) This person was too comfortable with their situation.
 - 3) This person is out of work longer than those of other demographics reviewed.
 - 4) When this person returns to work it is at a lower salary and with lower status than previously.
 - 5) This person has a harder time accepting the corporate culture.
 - c. We need to find out if this person is able to become trained and/or coached to become an entrepreneur.
 - d. Veterans who are either in the Reserve or National Guard find themselves having to transfer their current knowledge and skills with less difficulty

- e. Veterans in the 18-34 year old category are returning to school and develop a plan utilizing the education and employment benefits offered during their exit from the military.
3. Meeting with Motorcycle Clubs. On April 22nd, 2013, I met with the members of the “Patriot Guard Riders” and the “Leathernecks.”
 - a. During both separate engagements we discussed the importance of having their members stop by the office and ensure that their benefits were in order through the VA.
 - b. We also discussed the Peer to Peer program and ways that each organization could help their members through the program and that we are seeking mentors for possible Veterans that may need an “assist” from their older brother.
 4. Job Shadow with Tom Walker. On April 23rd, 2013, I spent the morning with Tom Walker, the senior benefits counselor at Stratton VA Medical Center with the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (NYSDVA).
 - a. The NYSDVA is another Veterans Service Organization that is allowed to assist Veterans in developing and submitting claims to the VA. Not all county service agencies utilize NYSDVA accreditation and use others like the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars or the Military Order of the Purple Heart. The advantage of NYSDVA is that this organization utilizes an electronic format for claims.
 - b. We discussed the possibility of NYSDVA assigning a service officer to support our operations as we are planning to begin our outreach initiative in the months to come.
 - c. We discussed that the majority of the claims that are back logged are due to poorly developed claims submitted by poor performing service officers. Saratoga is blessed to have two highly rated individuals whose quality of work is recognized throughout the state.
 5. Meeting with Congressman Paul Tonko’s Staff. On April 24th, 2013, I met with Cora Schroeter, Constituent Representative, for the Towns of Clifton Park, Halfmoon, Waterford, Stillwater, Malta, and the Cities of Saratoga Springs and Mechanicville. We discussed ways to build partnerships and agreed to introduce the Congressman to our affiliates in the VA for future initiatives that may affect Saratoga County.
 6. Navy Fleet Family Support. On April 24th, 2013, I met with Shawn. R Morgan, LCSW, Director, Fleet and Family Support Center, Naval Support Activity, Saratoga Springs. Shawn described his duties and responsibilities as Family Support Center Director to include the highlights of the Centers’ operations.
 - a. He is interested in joining the Saratoga County Veterans’ Alliance and partnering in future initiatives and events.
 - b. He invited the VSA to attend and participate in the Centers’ transitioning classes to discuss VA Benefits and set up follow on appointments.
 7. Meeting with Senator Kathleen Marchione. On April 25th, 2013, I met with Sen Marchione for about 30 minutes and discussed the following:
 - a. Request an extension of time to utilize the funds received for the program.
 - b. Discuss the current status of the program and the way ahead.

c. Discussed the first 30 days as the new VSA Director.

8. Veterans Outreach.

- a. May's 2013 Honor our Deceased Veterans Ceremony will take place on the 21st at 2:30 in the Board Room. The honoree will be Harold Irving Smith from the Town of Corinth. This ceremony was re-scheduled from March due to weather.
- b. The Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency van transported 30 Veterans to the VA hospital this week. Ridership derived from the following towns:
 - 1) Saratoga Springs – 3
 - 2) Ballston Spa – 5
 - 3) Stillwater – 6
 - 4) Halfmoon – 3
 - 5) Clifton Park – 3
 - 6) Milton – 4
 - 7) Wilton – 3
 - 8) Moreau – 1
 - 9) Mechanicville – 1
- c. Assisted a homeless veteran with referrals for housing and employment and gave him assistance with personal hygiene items and food we had in the office.

9. Veterans Service Officer Actions.

- a. Frank processed 3 new claim at an average of 2 hours per claim.
- b. Frank conducted 8 open claims follow up engagements at an average of 1.5 hours per engagement.
- c. The team scheduled 3 claim appointments at an average of 1.25 hours per scheduling.
- d. The team served 5 walk-in clients at an average of 30 minutes per visit.
- e. The team processed 111 phone call inquiries at an average of 10 minutes per inquiry.
- f. The team received 4 referrals from within from County DSS resulting in 1 scheduled appointment for next week.

Upcoming Events:

April 29th, 2013.

- Meeting with Alicia Russo, New York State, Military One Source JFSAP

April 30th, 2013.

- Review, and revise the Saratoga County Peer to Peer Program

May 1st, 2013.

- Meeting with Dianna Rios, American Red Cross, Support to the Armed Forces

May 3rd, 2013.

- Meeting with Mary Morgan, Supervisor MA Johnson and Supervisor Richardson.

June 7th, 2013.

- At 1:00 PM at the National Cemetery; The Patriot Guard Riders of New York and its Veterans Recovery Program will render full military honors interment of unclaimed cremated remains of 14 Veterans.

Conclusion: We have developed the Team's Mission, Vision, and Priorities of Effort with the assistance of our affiliates and community partners. We will discuss these items in the days to come and how they will add value to the county and benefit our Veterans.

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