



SARATOGA COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY
152 WEST HIGH ST., BALLSTON SPA, NY 12020

SC-VSA

June 30th, 2013

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

Subject: Events and Activities Summary for June 1st through June 30th, 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.

Summary:

1. Veterans Self Sufficiency. Develop sustainable initiatives where Veterans are able to become self sufficient through the collaborative effort of the Saratoga County Veterans Employment Task Force.

a. The Veterans Employment Task Force developed a survey targeting 770 unemployed veterans who are collecting unemployment insurance (UI), or have exhausted their UI. The team will meet on Monday, July 8th, 2013 at 1:00pm to review and discuss the survey results.

- 1) We have 86 responses out of 707 surveys sent; with 44 responses (6%) requested assistance. The group needs to decide if the survey results are still valid. If the group decides to move forward with 6% of the results – we will.
- 2) At the end of this session we should have a better idea of which direction or directions the TF will go to next.
- 3) We'll also discuss the three meetings that Dan Perkins (NYS DOL), Kimberly Lisa (NYS DOL), Lisa Scaccia (SC E&T) and I met with the Workforce Investment Board, the Chamber HR Council and the Phone conference with Time Warner Cable. All three meetings were focused on the following:
 - Learn "What the business know about which incentives are out there , for hiring Veterans."
 - Encourage businesses to start hiring Veterans.
 - Encourage businesses to participate in the upcoming Hiring Conference.
 - Identify which businesses we can establish a protocol for preferential treatment of qualified Veterans presented by the Task Force.

- b. The June 12th, 2013 event was hosted by Denise Romeo, Vice President, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce.
2. 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.
- a. On Tuesday, June 11th, 2013, Mary Ann Johnson, our Veterans' Committee Chairwoman and I met with Sherriff Bowen in order to gain his endorsement for our Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative.
 - 1) Sherriff Bowen embraced the mission and his staff has started to share their arrest sheets with this office (along with Courtney and the VetHelp Folks).
 - 2) Sherriff Bowen agreed to reach out to Jim Murphy (SC DA) to discuss the next steps in establishing a "Veterans Court Program."
 - b. In coordination with Courtney, VETHELP, Guardian House, County Jail, and the DA's office we have been able to conduct a couple of practical exercises with Veterans who were potential candidates for the program. One Veteran in particular met the tentative criteria, yet rejected our assistance.
 - c. Next step is to develop a process diagram for the "VJO Network" to align to.
3. 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.
- a. The program has been operating at a measured pace since 18 January and hosted a Kickoff Event on June 13th, at 6:00pm in the NYS Military Museum/Research Center.
 - b. We currently have 5 peer teams, 13 trained mentors and 6 mentor applicants.
 - c. Amy is developing a training pipeline for our mentors and the next training event will be on August 9th, 2013. The training topics:
 - Mentor Roll Details
 - Ethics
 - Mental Health
 - d. Amy is developing a social events calendar and the next social event will be on September 13th, 2013. Location and time to be determined.
 - e. On June 18, at 10 a.m. at United Way of the Greater Capital Region, The of Rensselaer, Albany Housing Coalition and Saratoga Counties were invited to be the main speakers at United Way's next Family Support Network meeting. United Way of the Greater Capital Region convenes its Family Support Network quarterly. The Family Support Network is collaboration between service agencies, UWGCR, other funders and community leaders. Its mission is to strengthen families and improve community outcomes by building capacity, resources and supports.

- f. On June 20th, 2013, I met with Hans Lehr and Peter Lacy in order to discuss the progress of the Peer to Peer program. We agreed that we need to look at a grassroots approach to recruiting Veterans that may need a mentor. The next step, which we agreed on, is to develop a poster that is easy to read and understand to share with the Stewarts Corporation.
- g. Amy met with Gill Deroche, a retired military officer in order to recruit and integrate him into our program as a leader, mentor and advisory committee member. We met Gill during the Mentor Training Sessions offered by the Albany Housing Coalition. Gill brings a great deal of experience, enthusiasm and leadership.
- h. Amy also met with Don Tallman, from the Wounded Warrior Project to develop ways to collaborate on future social projects and for him to join the advisory committee.
- i. Mary Ann and I met with Bob Nevins, from the Saratoga War Horse in order to develop ways for both programs to work together. Bob has agreed to become a mentor and to join the advisory committee.
- j. Amy is planning to meet with the case managers of both the Guardian house and the Men's House from VETHELP in order to develop a partnership between both programs. She is planning to host a social function to introduce our female mentors to the Veterans of the Guardian House. This is a significant event. There has been plenty of discussions regarding Veterans that have experienced the trauma of sexual abuse, or exploitation either deployed or not deployed. We know that there may be a few male Veterans victims but by in large our population is female. These are our mothers, sisters and daughters and some of us have one of each; neither of which like to be told what to do by anyone let alone "a man." Now if they were a Soldier, Sailor, Airmen or a Marine.....forget it. Only another strong Military Woman can sit and talk to another Strong Military Woman. This is where our two pronged approach can help with establishing a foot hold within the Guardian house.

4. 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 of not receiving their deserved services and benefits. See attached concept brief. (If you print it out - use color ink.)

Intent:

- Provide services to Veterans in rural and urban areas.
- Reach handicapped and destitute Veterans unable to travel to Ballston Spa.
- Educate Veterans on their benefits and entitlements.

5. Veterans Trust Fund Initiative. Plan, coordinate and execute social events in order to promote our Veterans and raise money for our Veterans Trust fund.

- a. We are planning the Veterans Day 5K Run in coordination with the Town of Saratoga.
 - 1) On June 26th, 2013, Supervisor Tom Wood hosted our first meeting where we reviewed last year's run and revised the route. We asked Kim Gamache (Cross Country Coach) to join the committee.
 - 2) I have spoken to others with regards to sponsoring the race to include reaching out to the Saratoga Chamber of Commerce to ask for support in finding sponsors. The cost of the event last year was ~\$4K.

- b. On June 21st, 2013, Ryan Moore and I met with Fransesco M. Pecoraro of “Fundabilities” to discuss if “crowdfunding” is an option for raising money for Veterans’ Trust Fund. Mr. Pecoraro and his colleague answered several questions and we have forwarded the information we received to our County Attorney for his opinion. Our next step is to coordinate a meeting between “Fundabilities” and Mary Ann Johnson, our Veterans’ Committee Chairwoman in order to gain her endorsement.
- c. We are reaching out to the Patriot Guard Riders for funding raising ideas and possible partnerships.
- d. We are coordinating with the County Clerk’s Office to gather the contact information of the County Vendors that are supporting the “Return the Favor” Card. The intent is to reach out and inform them of the County’s Veteran’s Trust Fund.

6. Saratoga County Veteran’s Business Council/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.

- a. On June 18th, 2013 we conducted our first meeting. This event was hosted by Denise Romeo, Vice President, of the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce.
- b. Below is a tentative list of the all Veteran Business/Civic leader group:

- VETHELP
- Soldier On
- United Way
- MTB Bank
- Global Foundries
- Mohawk Ambulance
- NTB Bank
- Bond, Schoeneck & King’s Albany office
- Wesley Health
- Homeless and Travelers Aid Society

- c. Next meeting is planned to for July.

7. Veterans Service Operational Update.

- a. On June 29th, 2013, Saratoga County hosted a Ceremony in honor of United States Marine Corps, Lance Corporal, Anthony Joseph Denier, at Gerald B.H. Solomon-Saratoga National Cemetery.
 - 1) More than 200 people turned out to pay their respects as Anthony’s name was added the Saratoga County Veterans Monument.
 - 2) Those organizations that helped make this event the success that it was are:
 - USMC, MAG-49 Det Bravo from Newburgh, New York
 - US Marine Corps League
 - Leathernecks, Adirondack “Revolution” Chapter (USMC Motorcycle Club)
 - Patriot Guard Riders
 - American Legion

3) <http://saratogian.com/articles/2013/06/29/news/doc51cf84b9de826751789554.txt?viewmode=2>

- b. June's 2013 Honor our Deceased Veterans Ceremony took place on the 18th at 2:30 in the Board Room. The honoree was Robert A. Fusco Sr. from the Town of Waterford.
- c. Josie scanned 26 binders of miscellaneous discharges in and electronic and we are able to search by name. (3119 total scanned discharges). These are in addition to all of the discharges on file at the Saratoga County Clerk's Office.
- d. The Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency van transported 108 Veterans to the VA hospital this month. Ridership derived from the following towns:
 - Saratoga Springs – 25
 - Ballston Spa – 18
 - Stillwater – 20
 - Clifton Park – 12
 - Milton – 13
 - South Glens Falls (Moreau) - 1
 - Halfmoon – 2
 - Edinburg – 2
 - Hadley – 4
 - Wilton – 6
 - Mechanicville – 5
- e. DSS Referral to Frank McClement (VSO). The veteran was unaware of his health care eligibility through VA, and was connected to VHA services. Frank also discussed his open claim, and answered questions and explained the Peer to Peer Program and connected him to Amy Hughes. The Veteran was partnered with a mentor of the same military occupation in service and also served in Iraq.
- f. Frank met with a Veteran on a few occasions last month who was having financial difficulties. Frank assisted the Veteran in developing the application and the Veterans Committee voted in favor of the Veterans' grant request.
- g. Josie assumed responsibility to coordinate with Leatherstocking Honor Flight on Saturday June 8, 2013. She ensured transportation to Albany International Airport for 5 of Saratoga Counties WWII Veterans and 3 "guardians" to assist them on this memorable day. Our Veterans were escorted to Albany by the Patriot Guard Riders.

8. Veterans Service Officer Actions.

- a. Frank processed 25 new claims at an average of 1.25 hours per claim.
- b. Frank conducted 24 open claims follow up engagements at an average of 1.5 hours per engagement.
- c. Frank scheduled 163 claim appointments at an average of 1.25 hours per scheduling.
- d. The team served 54 walk-in clients at an average of 20 minutes per visit.
- e. The team processed 291 phone call inquiries at an average of 8 minutes per inquiry.

f. The team received 26 referrals from within from County DSS resulting in 5 scheduled appointments.

Upcoming Events:

July 3rd, 2013.

- Meeting with Frank and Marry Ann to review Veterans Service Claims Matrix. The intent is for Frank to brief the Veterans' Committee on his progress once or twice a year.

July 8th, 2013.

- The Saratoga County Veterans' Employment Task Force will meet to discuss the results of the 707 survey's that were sent out.

July 9th, 2013.

- The Veterans' Committee will meet with CDR Vincent Garcia visiting as the guest speaker.

July 11th, 2013.

- Meeting with VETHELP and the Stratton VA Folks to discuss ideas in preparation for the upcoming Homeless Veterans Stand Down to take place on September 28th, 2013 in Albany.

- Meeting with LTC April Critelli, Deputy State Surgeon, NYARNG, in order to discuss the Peer to Peer program. She would like the Peer to Peer "Panel" to stop by and share their programs with the NYARNG Wellness Committee. Date and time to be determined – This is an awesome opportunity to build a partnership with our NG folks!

July 16th, 2013.

- July's 2013 Honor our Deceased Veterans Ceremony will take place on the 16th at 2:30 in the Board Room. The Town is Moreau. The Veteran to be honored will be John A. Cahill.

July 18th, 2013.

- We will conduct a presentation for the Malta Sunrise Rotary Club. Of particular interest to them is the Veteran's benefit outreach initiative and the Saratoga County Veteran's Alliance.

July 22nd – 26th, 2013. (Tentatively)

- I will be attending a week long accreditation training in Syracuse hosted by the American Legion.

July 24th – 25th, 2013. (Tentatively)

- Frank will be attending a two day Service Officer Refresher training in Albany hosted by the American Legion.

July 29th, 2013.

- Amy Amoroso, Veterans Business Advisor of Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Small Business Development Center will meet with Ryan and Mary Ann in order to discuss a proposal make it so that Veterans receive the same certification through NYS that Women and Minorities receive. Governor Cuomo has stated that 20% of all state/government contracting be given to this MWBE for bidding purposes.

Conclusion: The team is planning to set up a table during the upcoming Saratoga County Fair and will provide information regarding our Peer to Peer Program and other benefits for our Saratoga County Veterans.

Felipe C. Moon/Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency at (518) 884-4116 or fmoon@saratogacountyny.gov.