



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

SC-VSA

July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013

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

Subject: Events and Activities Summary for July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup>, 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 three courses of action (COA) utilizing the data we received from the survey we administered in June.
    - 1) Employment Assistance COA. Daniel Perkins, Veterans Employment Specialist, is planning to conduct a "Veterans Employment Workshop" for 22 Veterans on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 from 9:30 to 11:30, in the DSS Building on 152 West High Street.
    - 2) Entrepreneur/Business 101. Amy Amoroso, Veterans Business Advisor (supported by the two Chambers of Commerce) is planning to conduct a "Looking to Start a Business: Business 101 Class" for 21 Veterans in August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 from 9:00am to 12:00pm, at the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. (Rain Day: First Week In September) She will then develop "individual business planning sessions for each Veteran.
    - 3) Training and Education Assistance. Lisa Scaccia, Director, Saratoga County Employment and Training Department is planning to set up appointments to conduct education and training needs assessments of nine Veterans, beginning on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.
  - b. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, we conducted a meeting with Don Little, Director, VETHELP and Michael Perez, HR/Recruiter, Angio Dynamics in order to develop a long term Veterans Employment relationship between VETHELP and AngioDynamics. This effort will improve the lives of our local Veterans here in Saratoga County and our neighbors. At the end of this meeting we walked away with a nice plan to have

both organizations conduct onsite visits and briefings to build a better understanding of one another's needs and capabilities to manage each other's expectations.

- c. On July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013, we conducted a meeting with Mary Ann Johnson, Ryan Moore and Amy Amoroso in order to confirm or deny the feasibility of an idea to present to the members of the New York State Legislature. Amy Amoroso, Veterans Business Advisor of Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Small Business Development Center is a leading member of our Veterans Employment Task Force.
  - 1) We would like to 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. We believe that it is only fair to now add Veterans into this pool and give them the same preferential treatment for business contracts and bidding.
  - 2) Senator Kathleen Marchione, Assemblyman Daniel Stec, and Assemblyman John McDonald are all in support of this idea and want to develop and propose a bill to grant our Veterans this preferential treatment.
  - 3) We are planning to conduct a meeting on Wednesday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 11:00am in the Board Room of the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce.
- d. On July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013, we conducted a meeting with Don Little, Director, VETHELP and Michael Saccio, Director, Schenectady City Mission in order to develop a long term relationship where the City Mission will assist VETHELP in establishing a hospitality service employment option for local businesses that cater to tourist and entertainment.

2. Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO). 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 Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Jim Murphy, Saratoga County District Attorney informed the "VJO Network" that he spoke to a judge about the possibility of a Veteran's Court in the justice court's in all 44 town and village courts in the county. This is an enormous undertaking and one that needs to be planned out and discussed (to include the availability of DA and Public Defender Resources for these courts)
- b. An idea could be to have the court be placed on a regular docket, with the veterans seen first prior to general public—this could be a nice step forward.
- c. On Tuesday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Courtney (VA -VJO), Don (VETHELP), and I met in order to discuss where we are with our program and what our next step is.
  - 1) Most importantly – Our Deputies and Assistant DA's have been very supportive and patient as we work through our process development. It is an amazing feeling knowing that a Veteran has so many people supporting his/her effort to live with a sense of dignity and respect.
  - 2) Courtney took the first "Look" at the intake questionnaire/form that we are developing for Saratoga County.
  - 3) The intent of the form is for one person (to be decided) to call the jail and retrieve the necessary information for the "VJO Network" to decide if a Veteran (who is pending sentencing) is a candidate

for services (treatment, housing, and/or peer support). We have been using the “Veteran Referral Sheet” as a base. I believe we all agree that we want to help our Veterans and at the same time not burden our Deputies with multiple phone calls and requests. Developing a process where one person representing the “network” utilizing a single point of reference will help us.

- 4) Once we have finalized the document – I’d like to schedule a meeting with our jail supervisors to ensure we “got this right.” They are the key stakeholders and we need their buy in with this preliminary step.

- d. During the month of July we received 2 – 3 notices of Veterans being admitted into our County Jail.

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. We currently have 5 peer teams, 13 trained mentors and 9 mentor ready to be trained.

- b. The “basic training pipeline” for our mentors consists of the three hour classes listed below:

- Mentor Roll Details
- Communication
- Ethics/Boundaries
- Mental Health
- Alcohol/Substance Abuse
- Crisis Overview
- Suicide Overview
- Problem Assessment

- c. On Thursday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013, Our Peer to Peer program is planning a training session regarding Military Sexual Trauma. The Guest Speaker is Rebekah Havrilla who is a highly acclaimed subject matter expert regarding military sexual violence.

- d. On August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013, We are partnering with our neighboring Peer to Peer Programs to conduct a Peer to Peer social event at the NYRA/Saratoga Race Track that will coincide with the already planned Veterans Appreciation Event.

- e. We are partnering with our neighboring Peer to Peer Programs to plan, produce a Peer to Peer promotional video in order to attract and recruit Veterans to join our programs.

- f. We are partnering with our neighboring Peer to Peer Programs to develop different methods of marketing the program throughout the area that will be embraced by Veterans of various demographics.

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.

- a. This month the Veterans Committee authorized us to execute our outreach plan to include the Town of Galway. We plan to begin this outreach initiative in September
  - b. The Town of Malta took the first step to host a Veterans Appreciation Event and have our Veterans Service Officer conduct a Benefits Brief and address questions/concerns from individual Veterans.
  - c. Frank attended the Saratoga County Fair for 4 hours per day Tuesday-Friday. He averaged 3 solid engagements with Veterans per day, and spoke to numerous family members.
  - d. Frank attended NYSDVA Refresher Training in Albany on 7/24 and 7/25. Highlights of the training included a seminar on Discharge Upgrades, and detailed discussion on asset consideration for Pension claims.
  - e. Felipe attended and completed his Veterans Service Officer Training on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 through the American Legion.
  - f. Frank processed 16 new claims at an average of 1.25 hours per claim.
  - g. Frank conducted 18 open claims follow up engagements at an average of 1.0 hours per engagement.
  - h. Frank scheduled 7 claim appointments at an average of 1.25 hours per scheduling.
  - i. The team served 20 walk-in clients at an average of 20 minutes per visit.
  - j. The team processed 260 phone call inquiries at an average of 8 minutes per inquiry.
  - k. The team received 10 referrals from within from County DSS resulting in 2 scheduled appointments.
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. On Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 10:00AM in the vicinity of Hudson Crossings Park, The Town of Saratoga will host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Saratoga County Veterans Trust Fund 5K Race and 1 Mile Children's Run.
    - 1) Kim Gamache (Cross Country Coach) will develop and mark a fast, relatively flat course that is trail/road mix.
    - 2) Darryl Dumas and Michael Bielke (Hudson Crossing Park) are provided the utilization of the park infrastructure, facilities and trail.
    - 3) Denise Romeo (Saratoga Chamber of Commerce) is our lead in recruiting our race sponsors.
    - 4) Jim Higgins and Dan Lynch (Saratoga Springs YMCA) will provide volunteers and manage the volunteer force for our race. The "Y" is also going to provide a "Bounce House" for our younger race fans to warm up for their "1 Miler."
    - 5) Chuck Van Vorst (SUNY Empire State College) will assist in marketing and advertising.

- 6) CDR Vincent Garcia (NSA) will “push” our race to his folks.
- 7) Lou Cook (Commander, American Legion Post #234) will provide a show of presence and volunteers.
- 8) On August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 10:00 the “Race Committee” will meet at Hudson Crossing Park.

b. Fall Fund Drive.

- 1) We would like to hold a Fund Drive to kick off on Veterans Day and end on Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. The intent is to reach out and inform the County Vendors that are supporting the “Return the Favor” Card of the County’s Veteran’s Trust Fund. We will coordinate this effort with the County Clerk’s Office.
- 2) Peter Bardunias, (President/CEO) and the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County will be assisting us with this effort.

6. Saratoga County Veteran’s Business Council. 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 July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013 we conducted an impromptu meeting with certain members of the council. This event was initially cancelled but certain members did not receive the notice. The significance of this is that the attendance and the conversations we held are evidence of the council’s importance and commitment to our Veterans. I am very grateful to the Chamber for sponsoring this initiative, especially Denise Romeo.
- b. We exchanged many great ideas, discussed possible initiatives and long term goals.
- c. Our next meeting we will carve out our mission statement and vision.

7. Veterans Service Operational Update.

a. Honor Deceased Veterans Ceremony.

- 1) July’s 2013 Honor our Deceased Veterans Ceremony took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 in the Board Room. The honoree was John A. Cahill from the Town of Moreau.
- 2) August’s Ceremony is cancelled.
- 3) As a team, we have reviewed process of planning and conducted the ceremony over the course of five months. We have developed a “Draft” Policy and Process in order to improve the current program.
- 4) The Draft Policy and Execution Matrix are enclosed to be utilized for discussion by the Veterans Committee.

b. The Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency van transported 110 Veterans to the VA hospital this month. Ridership derived from the following towns:

- 1) Saratoga Springs – 30
- 2) Ballston Spa – 20
- 3) Stillwater – 26
- 4) Clifton Park – 5
- 5) Milton – 13
- 6) South Glens Falls (Moreau) - 3
- 7) Halfmoon – 1
- 8) Hadley – 1
- 9) Wilton – 4
- 10) Mechanicville – 3
- 11) Malta – 4

c. On Friday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 at approximately 1:45PM the Veterans Transportation Van, carrying eight Veterans, suffered a flat tire traveling north bound on Interstate-87.

- 1) The County Garage was notified and they dispatched a repair team to assist, along with another van.
- 2) State Troopers were notified and are dispatching a unit to check on our folks.
- 3) All passengers and driver were safe and unharmed during this incident.
- 4) Upon completion of the incident we verified that the van does not have all the proper safety equipment to be utilized if the vehicle were to break down.
- 5) We will conduct an inspection of the vehicle and compile a list of the items to be collected.

Upcoming Events:

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013

- Meeting with the Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Center to discuss ways to partner in order to care for our Veterans.

August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

- Peer to Peer Advisory Board meeting.

August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

- Saratoga County Veterans Committee meeting.

August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

- NYS Veterans Small Business Bill Proposal meeting

August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

- Meeting with Supervisors Jean Raymond, Mo Wright, Dick Lucia, and Mary Ann Johnson to discuss the Veterans Outreach program that will take place in September in the Town of Corinth.

August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

- Training session regarding Military Sexual Trauma.

August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

- Peer to Peer social event at the NYRA/Saratoga Race Track.

Conclusion: On Friday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 at 4:50pm I was informed by Michael Perez from Angio Dynamics that they are going to be a sponsor for our race with a \$1,000.00 donation!!! They are going to sponsor VETHELP's race as well with another \$1,000.00!

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