



STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PO BOX 41150 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1150 • 360-725-2167

**Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2013
40 et 8 Chateau, Vancouver, Washington**

Present:

Kathy Hobbs
Les Burger
Don Fenton
Merl Gorton
Don Schack
Phil Ruhmshottel
Owen McCurdy
Lloyd Burroughs
Roy Compton
Dick Whipple
Dennis Primoli
Bob Schwartz
Tito Medina
Francis Jeffery
Richard Marcelynas

Excused:

Oria Berndt
Gary Spevak
Gary Pearson

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Kathy Hobbs. Don Schack gave the invocation and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions by Kathy Hobbs and Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, Director. Alfie shared our agency vision which is "Honoring our Veterans in Connecting them with benefits they earned". She also asked everyone's help in doing outreach within their respective communities.

Agency Update (WDVA):

Gary Condra, Deputy Director gave update on Walla Walla Veterans Home – everything is on schedule and ground breaking is tentatively scheduled for June 2013. The Walla Walla Veterans Home is going to be constructed under the Green House Model replacing the institutional nursing home model with small intentional communities where residents and staff focus on living full and vibrant live. The Walla Walla Veterans Homes will consists of 8 adjoining houses and each house will have 10 private rooms

with shared living, dining and quiet area. Once construction is started the project should be completed within 1 year or so. A team from WDVA and NBBJ will be travelling to Texas to take a good look at the operation of their newly opened Green House Project and learn from them.

Heidi Audette, Communications Director gave an update on the Armed Forces License Plate – she asked everyone to market the Armed Forces License Plates - part of the fees goes towards maintenance of the Spokane Veterans Cemetery and a small portion goes towards helping homeless veterans. To date there are 13,362 veterans' license plates sold.

Liza Narciso announced the date of the upcoming Women Veterans Conference which will be on June 20, 2013 at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center. She asked everyone to spread the word, encourage every woman veteran to attend the summit and take some flyers and post it in their respective communities.

Panel Discussion – The following individuals presented a brief summary of the services they offered to the community:

Steve Roberts – Vet Corps representative at WSU Campus in Vancouver. Steve assists veterans who are entering colleges and university achieve their higher education goals by working with the college certifying officials or veterans representative, he also assist veterans navigate Washington's higher education and training programs and help the veteran adjust from military life to college life. He also assists veterans and their families connect with state and federal benefits they earned. The following are the breakdown of the approximate number of veterans attending college in Clark County:

Washington State University (Vancouver) – 169

Clark College – 700

Lower Columbia College - 150

Jason LaCarney – WDVA Incarcerated Veterans Program – Clark County, Jason gave an overview of this program. The Veteran's Incarcerated Veterans Program is a joint project with various counties in Washington State and Clark County is one of the counties that is participating in this program to address the needs of veterans' incarcerated in County Correctional Facilities, offering alternatives to jail and referral to housing, employment services, and treatment. Many of the veterans have come to the jail due to un-treated drug and alcohol issues, poverty, homelessness, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In Clark County they have the Veterans Therapeutic Court president by Judge Zimmerman. The Therapeutic Court provides a means to successfully rehabilitate veterans by diverting them from the traditional criminal justice system and provide them with the tools they need to lead a productive and law abiding life through treatment, rehabilitative programming, reinforcement and judicial monitoring. The program is an alternative treatment and sentencing option for defendants suffering from an underlying substance abuse and/or co-occurring mental illness and facing

misdemeanor criminal charges. Veterans are identified early through specialized screening tools and they voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan developed by a team of court staff, probation and law enforcement officers, veteran peer mentors, veterans resource and treatment professionals. The program is designed in four phases and is a minimum of 1 year. Through frequent status review hearings, the veteran participant treatment plan and other conditions are reviewed. Incentives are offered to reward compliance to court conditions and immediate sanctions for non-adherence are fairly handed down.

Pam Brokaw – Executive Director for Partners in Careers, Vancouver. Pam gave a brief on Partners in Careers (PIC) – they assist individuals become economically self-sufficient by providing resources, training and job placement opportunities. PIC offers job seekers tools to overcome employment barriers such as assisting them in skills identification, resume development, on site mock job interview, job training, coaching, workshops, networking, etc. Through community jobs program PIC work closely with employers find applicants that matched their specific job requirements. PIC is developing partnerships with private sector through the WA State Career Jump Program and through their new Veteran Women Program. Through Career Jump, local business can receive a staff member with subsidized minimum wage for 3 months. The business must commit to hiring the staff member at the end of the 3 months.

Dorothy Hanson – Director for Behavioral Health Services for WDVA. Dorothy gave a brief on WDVA's Behavioral Health Services especially our Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Program – this program attempts to create a community based avenue to counseling service that less formal in nature, offering the highest level of confidentiality possible. Services provided throughout the program include: individual, couples, family and veterans group counseling. Some of the many contracted counselors throughout the state offer group services to women veterans and spouses of veterans. Veterans may be referred to specialized inpatient or outpatient treatment offered the US DVA Medical Centers and Vet Centers within the our state. For veterans and their families to access WDVA's PTSD Program the veteran has to be honorably war era veteran. Additional counseling and consulting resources are being used to educate teaches and school counselors of the potential needs of school aged children of war exposed parents. Secondary and/or transgenerational trauma reactions in children can affect their ability to attend and learn successfully. Early detection and referral of children and families who are demonstrating specific reactions are significant priority in our PTSD Program. The PTST Program also provides in service training and consultation to colleges and universities counseling and other professional staff and faculty members. This program is designed to address the needs of war exposed veterans who are attending college after discharge or while still on active duty after deployment. Along with expert help with counseling methods, military and veteran cultural awareness training - providers are given instructions on how to use the sometimes complex services network available to war veterans and their family members.

Attendees were asked – what is on your mind?

- A veteran voiced his concern that he has to drive to Longview in order to access a WDVA PTSD Counselor – he asked why WDVA don't contract with a provider in Clark County. Dorothy answered that the reason why our agency did not contract with a provider in Clark County because the US VA Facility uses a fee services basis that a veteran does not have to access the VA Facility – they also have civilian contractors that provide counseling that the veteran can access.
- A Vietnam Vet suggested that presumptive conditions for Vietnam Vets and Persian Gulf War vets should be posted also in websites such as: American Heart Association, American Lung Cancer, American Diabetes, etc. Alfie will take this issue up to the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs to see what they can do.
- A veteran asked that WDVA visits with the different commanding officer in all the military bases in Washington State and asked them what type of hazardous chemicals/materials that way our agency would have records just in case down the line service members started showing signs of exposure.
- The consensus of everyone that was in attendance the need of more experience service officers in Clark County. Alfie will see how our agency can work with other veteran service organization in Clark County to address this issue and will report out to the community and Alfie also encourage everyone present to visit our website for news/updates.

Good of the Order:

Heidi gave a run down on the current veterans' bills that being heard in the house and senate:

- HB 1011 – Military/resident tuition – Removing the one-year waiting period for veterans or active members of the military for purposes of eligibility for resident tuition
- HB 1109 – Higher Ed Registration for Veterans - Requiring institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period to provide early registration for eligible veterans and national guard members
- 1132 – Gold Star License Plates - Authorizing spouses of United States armed forces members who died while in service or as a result of service to apply for gold star license plates. (**REVISED FOR ENGROSSED**: Authorizing certain family members of United States armed forces members who died while in service or as a result of service to apply for gold star license plates)

- HB 1319 – Welcome Home Vietnam Vet Day - Recognizing a welcome home Vietnam veterans day
- HB 1909 – Veteran Owned Business – Concerning Veteran Owned Business – Registry
- 5273 – Veterans Innovation Program - Concerning the veterans innovation program and the use of moneys in the state lottery account
- 5775 – Designation on Driver's/Identification Cards - Allowing for a veteran designation on drivers' licenses and identification cards

An announcement was made that WDVA is sponsoring a VSO Training that will be held at the Great Wolf Lodge on Grand Mount – April 19-21, 2013 – anyone interested in attending was given the contact information for registration

Dr. Les Burger announce the future construction of Fisher House in the Portland VA Center – they are in the process of raising the matching funds for construction

The next meeting will be on May 28, 2013 in Walla Walla – we are also doing a Site Dedication for the Walla Walla State Veterans Home in conjunction with Town Hall/VAAC Meeting.