



STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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VAAC TOWN HALL AND WOMEN VETERANS FORUM

May 1, 2024

8:30 am – 9:30 am Women Veterans Forum

Veterans Foreign Wars

10:00 am – 12:30 pm VAAC Town Hall

Mistequa Hotel Conference Room

2545 Smith Road

Chewelah, WA 99109

MINUTES

Welcome, Introduction of
VAAC Members
Invocation, Pledge of
Allegiance

Ron Black called the Town Hall to order and led the pledge of
Allegiance.

Introduced 2 VAAC Member in Attendance – Chuck Whitman and
Cat Nichols

Introduction of Guests

Ron Black made introduction of guests:

- Representative Jacquelin Maycumber
- Senator Shelly Short
- Stevens County Commissioners – Wes McCart, Mark Burroughs, Greg Young
- Nicole Rees, Eastern Washington Representative to Patty Murray
- Douglas Huff, Military & Veterans Liaison to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers

WDVA Updates

David Puente Jr., Director WDVA

- Thanked special guests and representatives from Mann-Grandstaff Medical Center for their participation.
- Thanked Spokane Regional Veteran Service Center and Cat Nichols for their participation.
- Thanked Mistequa Hotel for hosting the town hall in their facility.
- Explained that we are holding town halls in different communities as we want to hear what is working and what are issues/concerns that we can assist and how can we serve veterans and their families in the county.

Senator Short and
Representative MayCumber

- Introduced themselves and both are representing the 7th District. Thanked attendees and presenters for information that will be shared.

Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical
Center

Brett Bowers, PAO

- Justin Hunley, RN – Toxic Exposure Screener – Any veterans who served in Vietnam, Gulf War, OIF, OEF should have their screening done.
- Dr. Chandler – Women’s Clinic – out of 750 women veterans enrolled at Mann Grandstaff – she oversees the care of 350 women veterans.
- Jan Pennock – Chief, Office of Community Care – provides care to Veterans through community providers when VA cannot provide the care needed. Community care is based on specific eligibility requirements, availability of VA care, and the needs and circumstances of individual Veterans. Contact our Community Care office at 509-484-7969.
- Kaylie Ecker – Patient Advocate – she makes sure veterans enrolled at Spokane VA receive the best possible care and she can assist veterans’ concerns about their care as well as advocate for their rights.

WDVA Program Overview and
PACT Act

Steve Gill – Veterans Services, Counseling and Wellness
Administrator

Leland Cooper – Outreach Program Manager

- Overview of Major WDVA programs
- State Veterans Homes
 - Spokane Veterans Home - Spokane
 - WA Soldiers Home – Orting
 - WA Veterans Home – Port Orchard
 - Walla Walla Veterans Home
- Transitional Housing Program (THP)
 - Port Orchard – 48 beds
 - Orting – 82 beds
 - The goal is to increase residential stability.
 - Increase their skill level.
 - Assist them in permanent housing.
 - Assist in obtaining employment.
- Veterans Services
 - Contracts with 6 Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)
 - Currently 23 county Veteran Service Officer (VSO) agreements with 26 out of 39 counties being served.
 - Have MOAs with 7 out of 29 federally recognized Indian tribes.
- Veterans Service Programs
 - Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP) – offers protective payee services for veterans and family members who are incapable of managing their own finances.

- LGBTQ+ Veterans Outreach Coordinator – Robin Lang connects LGBTQ+ veterans to their benefits.
- Transition, Readiness & Family Services
 - WA State Military Transition and Readiness Council (WSMTRC) - Partnership that supports service members and families to successfully transition into civilian careers.
 - Military Spouse Initiative – policy and program advocacy for military spouses.
 - Veteran Owned Business (VOB) Program – recruits and enrolls veteran and service members in VOB certification.
- State Veterans Cemetery – Rudy Lopez
 - Located in Medical Lake
 - Eligibility requirements mirror US Dept. of Veterans Affairs cemeteries.

New application on WDVA website: [Cemetery | WDVA \(wa.gov\)](http://www.wdva.wa.gov/Cemetery)

Counseling & Wellness

Keith Meyer, Director Counseling & Wellness

- Counseling & Wellness Programs
 - WDVA Counseling Program – contracted licensed mental health providers serve veterans and families experiencing PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma.
 - Brain Injury & Recovery Program – supports and represents every veteran in WA.
 - Suicide prevention and Support Program – Governor’s challenge to prevent suicide among service members and families.

Provided the following counseling services available in Stevens County:

- NE WA Family Counseling – 358 E. Birch Avenue, Ste. 101, Colville, WA (509-684-3200)

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program

Holly Stenglein – HVRP Program Specialist

HVRP is a proven, successful program that gets homeless veterans off the street and back to being productive members of society. WDVA provides HVRP services to Veterans in King, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Thurston, Lewis, Clark, Yakima, Spokane, Stevens, Pend O'reille, Ferry, Grant, Adams, Lincoln, and Whitman Counties.

The HVRP offers a structured, individually designed case management plan to assist veterans to become employable and secure.

Program Services include:

- Immediate needs – food, clothing, transportation, and access to shelter.
- Outreach to homeless veterans’ providers.

- Employability needs and skills assessment.
- Job readiness services, including transitional housing assistance, basic skills training, therapeutic work, résumé development and employment opportunity referrals; and 30, 60, 90, 180, and 270-day job retention follow-up.

Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC) Overview and Update

Julz Carey, WVAC Vice Chair

- Town Hall has changed women attendance by adding the WVAC to the VAAC Town Hall agenda.
- Has created a forum in area for women to ask questions.
- Has created a space for women veterans.
- Mission is about being advocates in our community for Washington State Veterans
- 4 things the WVAC does:
 - Connect women to their identities as veterans.
 - Change the perception of what veterans look like.
 - Connect women veterans to benefits.
 - Connect women veterans to the community.
- Doing a call out to all women veterans
- Handed out information on how to connect to Women Veterans.
- Asked for veterans to reach out and connect with women veterans.
- Women's Veterans Conference June 8, 2024, which is going to be held at the Yakima Convention Center.

Closing and Meeting Adjourned

Solomon thanked Mistequa Hotel and presented a WDVA Certificate of Appreciation and WDVA Challenge Coin

Adjourned - 12:40PM