

WINNEBAGO COUNTY COUNCIL OF VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

DATE: June 9, 2016 @ 9:30 AM
LOCATION: J.P. Coughlin Building
PRESENT: Joe Aulik Judy Steckbauer
Jim Hoyman Jim Romnek
Dave Mix John Bjorklund
John Chevalier James Meinke
Phil Moore Roy Rogers
Richard Daseke Debbie Hendriks
Eric Estel Duane Canon
Char Griffin Rosemarie Pitz
Joe Maehl

1. Call to Order

Joe Aulik called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Joe led pledge of allegiance and moment of silence for those currently serving, POW's and MIA's.

3. Roll Call/Introductions

Roundtable introductions. Again routed new calendar of veterans' events and attendance sheet. Joe briefly spoke on the huge increase in mental health issues seen by the office and veteran suicide.

4. Old Business

MVM – Char spoke of upcoming book signing. Again reminder that MVM will be open during EAA every day 10-5. Looking for docents. Downtown office will close as soon as computer services are available. MVM is exploring idea of a permanent outside area for flag disposal for other organizations to also utilize to do ceremonies on a regular basis. Looking at making this an Eagle Scout project and also donations from other VSO's. How many other organizations are interested in this and about how many flags would they be disposing of? Education to community that the MVM could be a drop off point. Many people do not know what to do with worn out flags. Joe will take questions and put out in an e-mail and then get some feedback to the MVM.

5. New Business

Roundtable of upcoming VSO events. Detailed in veterans events calendar.

Debbie Hendriks – Family Assistance Specialist for the Wisconsin Military Family Assistance Center. She is a resource and referral contact for NG, Reservist and veterans. Always looking for resources for veterans. Works out of Appleton NG Armory. The VA does not advertise programs so we are it. Contact information: Office (920)831-5880 or deborah.m.hendriks.ctr@mail.mil

-Joe again reminded everyone that he has started a radio program once a month on 14.90 AM, first Tuesday of each month, 8:30 AM. Not a call in program. This month he spoke on suicide.

-Eric Estel spoke on the issue of Military ID cards. You have to go on-line or call for an appointment. Currently the closest facility is Green Bay (Appleton no longer doing). Recently Eric acted in the capacity of Casualty Assistance Officer for the family of a veteran that committed suicide in FDL. At his time of death, the veteran was fighting a PTSD claim with the VA. He did not meet all of the criteria, so denied. Means a lot if PTSD on death certificate. Passing away from a SC conditions brings benefits to dependents.

6. Homes for Heroes and Journey Together Services Dogs, Inc.

Introductions of group with Journey Together Service Dogs, Inc. Several dogs at meeting and they were also introduced. This program is designed for veterans diagnosed with PTSD. Started about 1 year ago under another non-profit. Working out of the Oshkosh Prison System with prisoners and employees assisting with program. Currently 11 dogs in programs. Youngest dog is 3 months. Prisoners also work with Acu-Paws program. Prisoners

are responsible for total care of the dog. It is a voluntary program for the prisoners and employees. Some of these prisoners are veterans. This is a way for them to give back to the community for the crimes they have committed. 75 years of training experience between all trainers. Program has also partnered with FVTC and prisoners can get a certificate for participating in this program so they have marketable skills when they are released. Besides making a big difference in the lives of veterans that receive these dogs, it also makes a huge impact in the prisoners lives. This program runs on donations. Team Work and responsibility are learned. Question asked how do these dogs get partnered with veterans? If you know of a vet that is diagnosed with PTSD or another mental health condition and is interested in receiving a dog the application is on-line and they will also speak to a mental health counselor. There are 2 pages of commands that the dog learns. Depending on the veteran's issue, the dog is personally trained to assist in that area, whether it be fear of large crowds or panic attacks Dogs can be trained to do pretty much anything to assist. Contact information; JourneyTogetherServiceDog.org, (920)322-5532, P.O. Box 2205 Oshkosh, WI 54902.

Homes for Heroes – Pam Shubert is a mortgage lender. She gives a \$500 mortgage credit for any purchase or refinance. Also if the lender is affiliated they give 25% back to the program. No fee, just a give back to American's Heroes. Veterans, Police, Fire Fighters, Teachers. Also good for guard or reservists. You do not have to have active duty. Even if you have already had a VA loan, you can still get another one. She will look at entire veteran situation and which loan program would be the best deal. Contact information; (920)410-2646, pam.shubert81@gmail.com.

7. Training Topic – Upcoming Presumptive Conditions due to Agent Orange Exposure/Exposure to Burn

Pits

VVA Press Release on bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's like symptoms distributed. Joe encourage veterans to apply because some court cases have already been approved. If a veteran has any condition that they suspect is related to AO, apply. Even if initially denied, at some point may go back if added to presumptive list and retro paid since original application date. Spoke on need for strong medical opinion from physician if condition is not on presumptive list. Spinal Bifida possibly downgraded. Some discussion on disabilities with children of veterans exposed to AO. 150 alignments have been identified. Phil Moore encouraged everyone to get connected with their legislators because a lot of legislation coming up. Joe also encouraged involvement.

-Joe has just met with WDVA, WCA and CVSO's regarding the CVSO grant. WDVA is out of touch with folks at this table so they make decisions and local veterans are not part of the process or decision. Encouraged people to get involved with issues such as regionalization, new presumptive disease, etc.

-Current legislation pending to consider Vietnam Blue Water veterans included in AO presumptive. Certainly veterans stationed off coast with wind drift, run off and drinking desalinating ocean water were exposed to AO. Many have same alignments as in-county veterans. Really all comes down to money.

-Flag Disposal Policy handout discussed. Joe read out loud. Discussion. As no objections, policy stands to try to remove by July 31.

- Office website is now up and running. If anyone should have suggestions, please contact office.

-Smoke from Burn Pits in Iraq have 1 of the same chemicals as AO, TCDD. So Iraq veterans were exposed to some of the same chemicals at Vietnam Veterans.

-Budget time coming up. Joe will be requesting 2 additional FT Benefit Specialist. The Neenah Office especially needs someone. Office could then stay open while current benefit specialist is on vacation or lunch hours. Could do a lot more business with more staff. Joe's vision is to expand what the office can do. Currently really maxed out when someone is off for any reason. Time is spread too thin. Positions are very mentally draining. Joe also briefly spoke on the position study and our benefit specialist being rated 1 step under the ADRC benefit specialist.

-Handout of all state and federal legislators.

-VA currently offering new TBI exams to veterans whose initial exam was not conducted by 1 of 4 designated medical specialists and provides these veterans the opportunity to have their claims reprocessed. To ensure that TBI is properly evaluated a psychiatrist, physiatrist, neurosurgeon or neurologist must complete the exam. The VA will be contacting those affected by this and they will not need to submit new claims. Their effective date can be as early as the original date of the TBI claim.

7. Next Meeting Time, Date and Place

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be July 14, 2016 @ 9:30 AM, James Coughlin Building, Meeting Room A. A different benefit will be covered each month and also any new information the office has received. Joe encouraged participation in this meeting. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Steckbauer