

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes
Monday, February 1, 2016
Verkuilen Building Senior Auditorium
21885 Dunham Clinton Twp, MI 48036

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Co-Chair, Laura Rios at 9:00 A.M.

Attendees:

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Joshua Arnston | The Mission Continues | Michael Kolb | Vick Funeral Home |
| Gabriella Barstow | AFSC/CFPB | Althea Kyles | VOA |
| Jeremy Bonka | TTI/SSVF | Don McRae | Salvation Army |
| Laura Chirio | NG Family Program | Mark Meadows | VAMC Detroit |
| Lisa Duncan-Edwards | Veterans Services | Paulus Obey | Selfridge Fam. Sup. |
| L.V. Ervin | Shepherd's Gate | Julie Patterson | Veterans Services |
| Kara Fields | MCCC | Kyle Pollett | Staff/Sandy Levin |
| Gerald Fisher Curley | VAMC | Sarah Pushies | NG Family Program |
| Patrick Forystek | Walsh College | Laura Rios | Veterans Services |
| AC Giles | TTI/SSVF | Patti Roland | Medical Examiner |
| Marie Goral | Veterans Services | Yolanda Spencer | VAMC |
| Madeline Habib | MCCMH/HSCB | Shaun Taft | United Way SEM |
| Lynn Henges | MVAA | Dave Thomas | MVAA |
| Crystal Kinsman | WDA/Veterans | Diane Ursu | WDA/Veterans |
| | | Heather Whited | MCA/SSVF |

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kara Fields made a motion to approve the January 04, 2016 minutes. Mark Meadows seconded the motion and it was approved by the collaborative.

III. OLD BUSINESS

Laura Rios reported that VAMC transportation began on January 4, 2016. Vets must have a morning appointment. Wheelchairs, oxygen tanks, and caregivers are not allowed. The majority of veterans riding are from Vets Returning Home. There are four pickup locations. Two days of notice are requested and veterans need to call (586) 469-5315 to get on the schedule. Veterans Services is still looking for volunteer drivers.

Kara Fields spoke about the VCAT Meeting held at Macomb Community College on January 21, 2016. There were an estimated 80 attendees.

One of the presenters was Humble Designs from Pontiac. They help homeless people who are just getting into a home with furniture and everything it takes to make an empty house or apartment a home, such as furniture, pictures, etc... They spend around \$2500.00 per home and

are funded by corporate sponsors. They have done over 1,000 houses and average 3 per week. They only have a two week waiting list. Laura Rios stated that studies show that the people who get this service have less than 1% chance of becoming homeless again.

Gabriella Barstow and Marci Burt from Michigan Works! did presentations on the Veterans Boot Camp and Financial Coaching available through their agency.

IV. SPECIAL SPEAKER: PATTI ROLAND-MACOMB COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Patti Roland is the Manager of Operations at the Macomb County Medical Examiner's Office. She spoke about a woman who died at McLaren Hospital who came in unresponsive after being hit by a car. Bodies are kept in their building for 30 days so that they can make every effort to make an identification. This case was a challenge as there were numerous roadblocks such as she had no family, she was homeless, her last name was Smith, etc...Patti explained how they go through the process of making 100% positive identification of the bodies. She was finally able to track the woman to San Diego and was able to identify her through a chest x-ray obtained from a hospital there where Ms. Smith received treatment.

Patti has numerous resources that she uses to help in the identification including law enforcement, criminal records, hospital records, social media, dental records, hardware implanted in the body, pacemakers, DNA and family. She explained how much easier it is if the family will at least come forward and identify the body even if they don't want to claim it.

There was a career veteran named Ken Moore who was held at the Macomb County Medical Examiner's Office for 9 months before they finally made a presumptive identification so that his final arrangements could be made. They were able to get one clear thumb print and went through months of bureaucracy trying to get his prints from the military archives and never were successful. They were 99.9% sure of the identification, but their standard is 100%.

Patti said that the VAMC is the most difficult hospital to deal with as a Medical Examiner's Office. They delay death certificates and medical records more than any other hospital in the area. Patti has had to go so far as to threaten to involve the media to get action from the VAMC. Mark Meadows stated he would take this information back to the VAMC.

Laura Rios explained that if the veteran ever had a claim that all of their records would have been sent to the VA Regional Office.

V. MIKE KOLB-HAROLD VICK FUNERAL HOME

Mike says that most funeral homes will work with the families of veterans by giving discounts and free services.

Mike stated that 90% of unclaimed bodies stay at the Medical Examiner's Office and 10% from hospitals. Vick Funeral Home is the funeral home that does arrangements for all unclaimed bodies in Macomb County. There are usually about 40 unclaimed bodies per year. Vick's first step when he gets involved is with the family and he explains that if they don't do anything immediately that they're making a Public Administrator next of kin. They negotiate amounts of

money or have even negotiated community service with the family. They try to avoid having to have a Public Administrator being appointed by Probate Court. Two or three of these end up being veterans. Now that Great Lakes National Cemetery is open, numerous financial options are available. The VA now pays for a casket or urn for an unclaimed veteran. They run every unclaimed body through the system to see if they're eligible to go to Great Lakes where they'll get an honors ceremony and a flag.

The funeral home gets paid specific amounts for their services by the State of Michigan. These amounts are very low compared to private funeral expenses. The VA is dragging their feet on reimbursement to funeral homes for unclaimed veterans. Laura Rios also gave a brief explanation of benefits paid for by the County of Macomb.

Shaun Taft suggested that a network be established to attend services of people who are unclaimed or alone. Madeline suggested that we include this in the packet we prepare for churches.

When someone goes into hospice, if they have no family, they should appoint someone to represent them so that they don't go unclaimed.

Mike handed out a blank death certificate form and suggested that members make copies and have people in their network fill in the information. He also stressed the importance of veterans having a copy of their DD form 214 so that upon death, it can be accessed immediately.

If a vet dies in hospice care, they are already preregistered with the Medical Examiner's Office and the funeral home can pick up directly from the home. If a vet dies at home and is not preregistered, the person who finds them should call 911, the police and fire department will come and they'll contact the Medical Examiner's Office to come out and do an exam. Once they release jurisdiction, the family can begin the arrangements with a funeral home.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Services Committee: Madeline Habib

Madeline stated that she's going to be creating a flowchart for death. MiVAP funding will be removed from the homeless flowchart and updated on the various sites it's posted on. The health flowchart is almost complete and will be submitted to the various committees for approval.

Benefits/Communication Committee: Laura Rios/Mary Beth Ryan

Podio will be having lunch webinars once a month so that everyone can learn how to better navigate and use Podio.

Jobs Committee: Crystal Kinsman/Mark Meadows

Mark Meadows reported on Employer Roundtable being held at VAMC on 2-5-2016.

Hiring Our Heroes will be at the VAMC on 3-5-16. Last year they had 75 employers at this event.

GM, Chrysler, and Ford will be doing hourly hiring soon and veterans should apply online under hourly hiring. Ford and GM tend to go to their local Michigan Works! office to post jobs there. If you have an interested veteran, Mark has referral forms that can be faxed directly to him.

Membership Committee: Shaun Taft

Shaun explained what people need to do to be added to the roster and get a nameplate. She also requested that if anyone knows of people that will no longer be attending to let her know so she can remove them from the roster.

VII. NEW BUSINESS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Joshua Arnston from a group called “The Mission Continues” spoke of opportunities in the Metro Detroit area for veterans and their families to do service projects. He offered to speak to anyone interested after the meeting.

There is funding available for dental work for homeless veterans that are housed in any of the area veterans homeless shelters.

Patrick Forystek is a veteran advocate from Walsh College who assists veterans with applying for VA education benefits.

Heather Whited said MCCSA has changed their name to Macomb Community Action.

Althea Kyles from VOA said they had a lot of donations that they were able to give to the veterans as Christmas presents. They’re seeking speakers on different subjects that will allow them to live independently. They are also seeking volunteer drivers. The apartments are being renovated with new paint, appliances, counters, and doors and she’s planning an Open House for when they are complete.

Gabriella Barstow is a financial coach at Michigan Works! and she welcomes all the referrals people can send. It’s a voluntary program and the veteran needs to contact her.

VIII. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Monday, March 7, 2016 starting at 9:00 in the Verkuilen Building Senior Auditorium.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Patterson, Secretary