

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes  
Monday, October 2, 2017  
Macomb Community Action Training Room  
21885 Dunham Road, Clinton Township, MI

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Laura Rios at 9:05A.M.

**Attendees:**

Bill Browning, Detroit VA Medical Center	Joel Rinkevich, Veteran Services
Brian Webb, SOM DHHS	Jonathan Drake, Simply Blessed Catering Veteran Owned
Carl M. Lopez, Veterans Treatment Court	Jonathon Boone, Veteran Community Organizer of Macomb
Charlene Myers, NCOA/DAV	Julie Patterson, Macomb Veteran Services
Christopher Goleman, 127 W61 FRG	Kara Fields, Macomb Community College
Crystal Kinsman, SOM Veterans Employment Services	Laura Rios (Co-Chair), Macomb Veteran Services
Darryle Johnson, 1st BN 24th Marines Selfridge	Lisa Marie Duncan-Edwards, Macomb Veteran Services
Dean Shunk, Macomb Veteran Services	Madeline Habib, MCCMH/HSBC
Debbie Hostos, Assistant to Jonathan Boone	Mark Kilgore, CARE of Southeastern Michigan
Donald Nitkin, American Red Cross	Mark Meadows, VA Medical Center
Dr. Rodney Tolbert	Patrick Thompson, Macomb County Veteran Services
Gabriella Bathlow, AFCS/CFPB	Paulus Obey, Selfridge Family Support Center
Gary Purcell, VVA 154	Sama Harp, Macomb Community Action
Gerald Fisher-Curly, VA Medical Center	Senna Shehede, Graduate Student Clinical Mental Health OU
Gerald W. Thomas, VA-Dearborn Vet Center	Shaun Taft, What Works, LLC
Jennifer Georgievski, VA Work Study MDHHS	Stephen Boegehold, Department of Health and Human Services
Jessica Cady, Congressman Levin's Office	Sue Walker, Salvation Army Harbor Light
Joanne Stern, Macomb County Crisis Center	Susan Casadei, Harbor Health Home Care
Joe McClellan, Buddy-to-Buddy	Tom Pitock, UM-Dearborn VA
	William Upshaw, Family Readiness

**II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Attendees of the meeting introduced themselves and stated what agency or business they represent.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

No proposed changes. Motion to approve the minutes: Kara Fields, 1<sup>st</sup>; Rodney Tolbert, 2<sup>nd</sup>; AIF.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

The air show at Selfridge was a huge success and the family day event drew in about 500 people. The 9/11 event at Macomb Community College was also a success but the group would like to better advertise next year's event if funding allows for it.

**V. SPECIAL SPEAKER**

OCTOBER SPECIAL SPEAKER: Judge Fuca – Veteran's Treatment Court. The veteran's treatment court is an intensive program that combines probation with treatment to ensure participants graduate from the

program sober and less likely to be arrested for future offenses. Macomb County has two veteran's treatment courts, one is a felony treatment court and the other is a misdemeanor treatment court. Veterans from other counties are sometimes transferred to the Macomb county veteran's treatment court if there isn't one available in their county. This program has been running for about six years and works collaboratively with the Macomb county circuit court. A 501(C)3 non-profit organization, Friends of Macomb County Veteran's Treatment Court, was set up to raise money for the veteran's treatment court. The court also receives it's funding from the state and was also recently awarded a federal grant. The grant money pays for all the testing for the individuals in the program as it is very costly. All military discharge types are considered for program participation except for dishonorable discharges. Program participants are expected to comply with an aggressive probation program that includes treatment, testing and counseling. A team meets weekly to discuss participant's progress and create a plan to reacclimate them to civilian life and cope with their problems. Veteran's treatment court does not "take it easy" on program participants but they do handle them differently in order to treat their problems effectively and prevent them from committing future crimes. The program is very rigorous and only accepts program participants who want treatment. They are also working to educate the defense bar so defense attorneys can understand the program is designed to help veterans and ensure success after probation ends. The veteran's treatment court does have discretion on who they accept into the program and they will consider veterans with a violence offense or violent criminal history. The most important part of the program is that participants are paired up with a mentor who is a veteran as well to support them through the process. Judge Fuca also informed the group that part of sobriety court involves the use of an injection called vivitrol after being released from jail and it blocks receptors in the brain and does not allow people to get high or drunk. This medication is usually covered by Medicaid and the VA and it allows people to focus on counseling and getting help rather than thinking about getting high or drunk. The biggest incentive for participants of the veteran's court is that they get better and overcome their addictions and other problems. The program will also help with travel vouchers and bus passes for those in need of transportation, in addition to covering all costs for testing. Judge Fuca is hoping for more graduates of the program to come back as mentors as they are a strong support for new participants and they help them through the probation process. The veteran treatment court is held every Thursday; the second Thursday of every month is big treatment court where everyone is required to be there for a breakfast meeting at 9:00A.M. and the team meets until 10:00A.M. Court starts after from 10:00A.M. to 12:00P.M. and all are welcome to attend. Representatives from resource agencies are encouraged to come speak to participants during the meetings and educate them on what services are available. The next graduation ceremony is November 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00A.M. at the at 41B District Court on Starks Drive in Clinton Township and everyone is welcome to attend.

## **VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Benefits/Communication Committee: Laura Rios/Mary Beth Ryan**

Laura went to training for county service officers last month and learned that the VA will pay for some of the costs to have health insurance for a service animal if the animal is needed due to a service connected disability. The veteran would have to be approved for a service animal, obtain the animal and then apply for the benefit at the VA through the prosthetics department.

Macomb County is celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the county. Macomb 200 is looking for ideas for some events geared towards recognizing veterans and the history of the county.

### **Jobs Committee: Crystal Kinsman/Mark Meadows**

There will be a veteran only Hiring our Heroes job fair at Oakland University on October 12<sup>th</sup> from 9:00A.M. to 2:00pm. Another veteran only hiring event will take place at the new arena on November 10<sup>th</sup> starting at 9am, participants will receive tickets for that night's basketball game. The event is a partnership between the Detroit Pistons and the VA and will feature a mini basketball tournament and other

entertainment. The veterans will need to bring identification to show they are a military veteran and should be dressed business casual with resumes in hand. All the information for the hiring events went out with the newsletter. The employment market for veterans in southeastern Michigan continues to be hot. Veterans can also be referred to Mark for information and assistance in finding employment. Additionally, Mark urged the group to call their representatives in Lansing and express their support of the forgiveness of driving responsibility fees act.

### **Services Committee: Madeline Habib**

Madeline is meeting with the Macomb Homeless Coalition and homeless shelters to explain the flowchart for homeless services and also to train them on the information page that has been created.

### **Membership Committee: Shaun Taft**

New meeting participants with new name cards should complete a membership form to be on the roster. The new name cards will be given to Madeline to create a blue name plate. Please print legibly on the membership form and name card. Members will be included on information email blasts and the roster is posted on the MVAC website. If a membership form is not completed you will not be on the roster and will have to sign in every meeting. If participants do not initial the roster or complete the sign in form, your name will not be on the attendees list on the minutes.

### **Faith Based Committee: John Drake**

The committee chair will be meeting with a fellowship of pastors in Detroit to educate them on veteran services and benefits, a meeting date is being determined.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS/IDEAS FOR FUTURE PRESENTATIONS**

The steering committee has five new speakers lined up to present at the upcoming MVAC meetings.

## **VIII. ROUND ROBIN**

Mark Meadows: An application was included with the newsletter for a new VA program for emergency mental health care. Veterans who need help can register at VA and receive the treatment they need.

Fisher House Detroit: The Fisher House Foundation and VA conducted a site visit and approved the site selection at John R and Palmer. The next step is to complete the application once the official letter is received from the Fisher House Foundation. After that, Washington is expected to approve the application by December of this year and then official fundraising efforts can begin.

Madeline Habib: The HSCB Information Exchange is taking place on October 26<sup>th</sup> at the MISD and registration for the event is available on the MISD website.

The VA closed out their fiscal year last week and the Voc Rehab hit all their targets in Macomb county.

Darryl Johnson: Darryl thanked those who participated in the yellow ribbon event. He also informed the group that lot of Marines and Airmen will be returning within the next six months and will need as many resources as possible.

Paulus Obey: Paulus will provide information to Laura on how veterans can be involved with the clean-up and rebuilding efforts after the hurricanes in Texas and Florida.

Gabriella Bartlow: Gabriella is a financial coach and can provide free financial coaching to veterans. Feel free to refer veterans to her for services.

The Veteran Community Organization of Macomb is a veteran group that meets at Macomb Community College. The group is open to all veterans and members do not have to be a student to participate.

Stephen Boegehold of DHHS: If anyone knows of a veteran who is receiving DHHS assistance please encourage them to have a conversation with their worker about their veteran status. Crisis season starts November 1<sup>st</sup> for gas and electric service assistance as well as furnace and hot water tank repairs/replacement for those who are eligible. Also encourage veterans to utilize the trust fund and Macomb Community Action.

Gary Purcell, VVA 154: The third Friday of every September is National POW/MIA Recognition Day and they raised awareness by passing out information cards to motorists at Hall Road and Gratiot. Not many people are aware of this holiday and Gary would like to see that change and show recognition to those individuals. Operation Christmas is starting with a dance being held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fern Hill Golf Club; entry is \$35 and an unwrapped new toy. Gary was surprised that the air show event did not allow the VVA to sell any of their merchandise since that revenue is used to fund the vet center. The vet center provides many services for veterans in the community and is staffed entirely by volunteers. There will be an open house at the vet center for Veteran's Day and all are welcome to attend.

Kara Fields, Macomb Community College: The Forever GI Bill was introduced and means they are eliminating the expiration date for veterans who separated from service as of January 1, 2013 or after. As of August 1, 2018, their GI Bill will never expire. Also, STEM programs have received limited funding to provide additional months to people who are using the post 9/11 GI Bill and can apply as of August 1, 2018.

Harbor Home Health Care: A new tool is available to veterans who are disabled and home bound to assess how many hours they would benefit having a caregiver in their home.

Region 10 VCAT is partnering with AARP for an event taking place in November. It will be in Wayne County but all veterans are welcome.

## **IX. NEXT MEETING**

The next MVAC meeting will be begin at 9:00A.M. on November 6, 2017. The meeting will be in the Macomb Community Action Training Room at 21885 Dunham Road, Clinton Township, MI.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:11A.M. by Laura Rios.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Palmer