

# VETERANS SERVICE-MEMBERS & FAMILIES COORDINATION COUNCIL/MYVA COMMUNITY

## *MEETING MINUTES*

*Wednesday, November 16, 2016*

### In Attendance:

David Brasuell, Co-Chairman, Idaho Division of Veterans Services  
Major General Gary Sayler, Co-Chairman, Idaho National Guard  
Joshua Callihan, Boise VAMC (VHA rep) & USMC Representative  
Kathy Malin, Director, Boise VARO (VBA rep)  
Karan Tucker, JANNUS  
John Reusser, Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline  
Terry Tippery, Director, Boise Vets Center  
Bill Reed, Idaho Department of Labor  
Brent Ferro, US Department of Labor VETS  
Dana Kelly, Idaho State Board of Education  
Alison Garrow, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation Mission 43 Guild Education  
Christina Iverson, Idaho Supreme Court Veterans Treatment Courts  
Tony Torres, Mission 43 Hire Heroes USA Idaho Area  
Daniel McQuesten, Air Force Reserve Representative  
Phil Wickliff, Retired Navy Representative  
Tracy Schaner, Deputy Administrator, Idaho Division of Veterans Services  
Kevin Wallior, Idaho Division of Veterans Services, Exec Assistant

*Next meeting: TBD/Spring 2017*

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Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM

### ***I. WELCOME – INTRODUCTIONS – ANNOUNCEMENTS***

- One by one, all attendees identified themselves and their organizations.
- David Brasuell, Co-Chairman, explained for new attendees that this meeting meets both the Governor's intent under his executive order as well as meets the MyVA initiative to improve the Veterans Experience.
  - The purpose of MyVA is for organizations serving veterans to coordinate and cooperate to improve the entirety of the Veterans experience.

## **II. BRIEFINGS**

David Brasuell – IDVS

- David briefed a group of Idaho Health & Welfare Navigators about Veterans Services.
  - H&W Navigators serve a purpose similar to Veterans Service Officers in that they help individuals navigate the processes for applying for benefits for which they are eligible.
- David briefed the Rotary Club of Pocatello about Veterans Services in eastern Idaho.
- David reminded everyone that the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and Wake Island is on December 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The American Legion Food Convoy is on November 19<sup>th</sup>.
  - This is a great event that provides the Idaho State Veterans Homes with plenty of delicious food items for ISVH residents.
- The state of Idaho is expected to have a \$140 + million surplus at the end of the budget year; projection only.
- This past year, was the year of Women Veterans
  - IDVS hosted the Biennial Women Veterans Conference
  - Women Veterans was the theme of this year's Boise Veterans Day Parade
  - The Warhawk Air Museum hosted a symposium of Women Veterans on November 12<sup>th</sup> titled "The Footprint of Military Women in Idaho & Beyond: A Symposium on Women Veterans."
- Eastern Idaho Cemetery update
  - Three prospective sites have been narrowed down to a single site in Blackfoot, ID
  - Further study is ongoing. Once the study is completed the site will be announced and opened up to the public for a 30-day comment period.

- Idaho has moved up the priority list. A grant for Cemetery construction could be issued as early as 2017.
- This Eastern Idaho Cemetery is separate from the new National Veterans Cemetery announced in Buhl, Idaho.
  - The Buhl Cemetery is part of the VA's National Rural Cemetery Initiative.
- In addition to VA National Veterans Cemeteries the VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has four different Cemetery Initiatives:
  - State Veterans Cemeteries, of which the existing Idaho State Veterans Cemetery and the proposed Eastern Idaho State Veterans Cemetery fall under.
  - VA NCA Rural Initiative, of which the National Veterans Cemetery announced in Buhl, ID is a part of.
  - VA NCA Urban Initiative
  - Tribal Veterans Cemeteries
- Tracy Schaner – update on Wheelchair Transportation Program
  - This program is intended for wheelchair bound veterans unable to receive transportation to medical appointments from either DAV or Medicaid.
  - Currently, is only workable in the Treasure Valley.
  - IDVS is seeking changes to the statute governing this program during this legislative session with an intention to expand the program across the state.
  - If the changes are approved by the legislature, IDVS will draft temporary IDAPA rules to reflect the changes in statute and then will get the rules permanently changed next year.

Major General Gary Sayler – Idaho National Guard

- Approximately half of the Air Guard deployed in the past year

- Operations and Maintenance supporting A-10s in Turkey recently returned from a six-month deployment.
  - The operations tempo was such that the equivalent of two years of normal flight operations were conducted during the six-month deployment.
- Approximately 220 airmen are scattered throughout the area of operations in eight different countries.
- There have been no significant unemployment issues for returning personnel from deployments.

Josh Callihan – VA Medical Center

- David Wood, the director of the Boise VAMC, is on assignment in Memphis, TN until late January or early February.
- Associate Director, Grant Ragsdale has announced his retirement.
- The Boise VAMC has a new Chief of Staff
- The Boise VAMC Parking Garage project has been put out to bid.
  - Possibly will be open for use in 2018.
- The new Imaging Building is nearing completion.
- The Boise VAMC has seen a 14% increase on new veterans enrolled.
  - This puts Boise VAMC in the top 10 across the nation for growth.
- Pilot programs
  - Boise VAMC has been selected for National and Regional Tele-health programs to be based here.
  - Boise VAMC has been selected to pilot medical scheduling software.
- Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling
  - Veterans no longer need to call or be seen in Primary Care to schedule routine Audiology and Optometry appointments.
- Boise VAMC received a five-star Strategic Analytic for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) rating.

- Separate from the Boise VAMC brief, Josh Callihan briefed the group on his involvement with the 2016 Disabled Veterans Elk Hunt.
  - This year, a visually impaired veteran was able to participate due to the efforts of Josh.
  - Josh found an apparatus that allowed a cellphone to be attached to the scope of the rifle. This allowed a spotter to assist the visually impaired veteran in lining up the rifle with the elk.
  - The Veteran was extremely pleased to be provided an opportunity to hunt when he believed the grenade that robbed him of his vision in Vietnam would prevent him from ever experiencing it.

Kathy Malin – VARO

- There are currently 380,000 rating claims pending nationally
  - Average 91 days pending
  - Average 112 days to completion
  - 94% local rating quality; exceeds national average
- VBA will be adding additional Full Time Employees in FY 17
  - VBA spent more than \$100 million in 2015 and \$85 million in 2016 overtime to process claims.
  - For 2017 the VA will use \$45 million that would have been spent on overtime towards new FTE positions focused on:
    - Non-rating claims
    - Dependency claims
    - Rating claims
    - Call center coverage
- The myVA 311 number launched in November.
  - 1-844-MyVA311 (698-2311)

- Intended for Veterans who do not know what number they are supposed to call. This service is designed to direct those Veterans to the location of service best suited to assist them.
- Veterans who know the direct number to the VA facility they want to call should continue to use that number.

#### Terry Tippery – Vet Centers

- There is major change ongoing at the Pocatello Vet Center
  - This is primarily due to retirements
- Redistricting changed what region Idaho Vet Centers fall under.
  - This change has no effect on the services provided to veterans.
- Vet Center operates a call center number
  - 1-877-WAR-VETS (1-877-927-8387) is an around the clock confidential call center where combat Veterans and their families can call to talk about their military experience or any other issue they are facing in their readjustment to civilian life. The staff is comprised of combat Veterans from several eras as well as family members of combat Veterans. This benefit is offered at no cost to the veteran.
- 187 individuals attended the Veterans Stand Down, 147 were veterans.
- Terry talked about services the Vet Centers and the American Red Cross provide.
  - Reconnection Workshops are confidential small-group (usually 8-12 people) modules, led by licensed mental health professionals. The workshops focus on building skills that enhance the likelihood of positive reconnections among family members, as well as the successful reengagement of the service member in civilian life, by increasing interactions and developing additional sources of support.
  - The workshops are free and available to all those impacted by a military deployment from all branches of the Armed Forces, which includes Reserve, National Guard, active duty service members, veterans and their families, including spouses, parents, siblings, significant others and close friends.

- Workshops and materials focus on learning useful tools, effective coping mechanisms and where to find resources. Available workshops are:
  - Communicating Clearly
  - Exploring Stress and Trauma
  - Identifying Depression
  - Relating to Children
  - Working Through Anger

#### John Reusser – Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline

- The Suicide Prevention Hotline is entering its 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation at the end of November. JANNUS operates the hotline in partnership with Idaho Health & Welfare, IDVS, and many other community partners. The advisory board for the hotline has representation from the veteran community and the VA.
- The Hotline has 175 trained responders
- Approximately 16% of callers into the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline are veterans/military and their families. This information is collected after the call is de-escalated. Demographic information is collected if the caller wishes to provide information. <https://www.idahosuicideprevention.org/>
- 2016 has been a year of growth
  - 838 total calls were affiliated with veterans, service-members, or families of either.
    - 490 calls from family members of veterans
    - 334 calls from veterans
    - 8 calls from active duty service-members
    - 6 calls from guard members
  - 34 callers were referred to the VA for services
    - 6 callers thought the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline was a direct line to the VA.

- Suicide Prevention Hotline responder training will be conducted in the last week of January
- The Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline has a crisis text response system at 208-398-HELP (208-398-4357). This system is operable from Monday through Friday 3PM until Midnight.

Bill Reed – Idaho Department of Labor

- IDoL received funding to hire additional Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER)
  - LVERs conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and encourage the hiring of veterans.
- Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of disabled veterans and other eligible veterans, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans, and veterans with barriers to employment.
  - DVOPs prepare veterans for LVERs

Karan Tucker – JANNUS

- JANNUS is a forty-year-old non-profit providing health and human services.
- Legacy Corps follows the Ameri-Corp model but focuses on serving veteran and military families in a caregiver role. The volunteers provide 10-12 hours a week of respite or family caregiver support. Approximately 500 hours a month of respite care to veterans and families.  
<http://www.jannus.org/program/legacy-corps/>
- PATH, Project for Assistance for Transition from Homelessness have enrolled and housed 60 veterans through outreach. Most of the peer support counselors have similar backgrounds to those they are helping. One of the PATH peer support specialists is a veteran and has helped the program achieve success with other homeless veterans.  
<http://www.jannus.org/program/path-project-for-assistance-in-transition-from-homelessness/>
- JANNUS is seeking a partner to bring a veteran & military oriented Small Business Administration program to Idaho.



Dana Kelly – Idaho State Board of Education

- Student Affairs Officers are looking at expanding benefits available.

Christina Iverson – Idaho Supreme Court Veterans Treatment Courts

- Idaho is the 1<sup>st</sup> state to implement statewide standards and guidelines on how Veterans Treatment courts operate. Includes:
  - Eligibility criteria;
    - Eligibility restrictions have been loosened to allow access to veterans involved in aggravated crimes (excepting cases involving sexual violence).
  - Case Management;
  - Coordination services; and
  - Evaluation
  - <http://www.isc.idaho.gov/solve-court/home>
  - [http://www.isc.idaho.gov/psc/VTC\\_Standards\\_Guidelines\\_4.2.15.pdf](http://www.isc.idaho.gov/psc/VTC_Standards_Guidelines_4.2.15.pdf)
- The National Association of Drug Court Professionals most recent conference had a focus on PTSD and Family involvement.
  - There is a focus on trauma informed care – not a punitive approach but how can the veteran be made whole and healthy again.
  - FY18 programs will be available that will approach the issue from this perspective.
- 189 justice involved veterans across all phases.
- The original Veterans Treatment Courts were modeled off of Drug Treatment Courts. As such, as the Veterans Treatment Courts become more established and more data is accrued, the model is evolving to better meet the unique circumstances of Veterans.
- Research on best practices is limited regarding Veterans Treatment Courts across the country. Idaho Supreme Court is looking to further and develop best practices to improve Veterans Treatment Court program in Idaho.
- Veterans Treatment Courts make a real difference in the lives of veterans.

- It takes approximately one and a half years for veterans to complete the program.

Tony Torres and Alison Garrow –Mission 43

- Mission 43 is a branch of the JA & Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation.
- Mission 43 is primarily focused on assisting Post-9/11 era veterans, although it is not exclusive to that group of veterans.
- There are four components: Purpose, Social Connection, Education, & Employment
  - Each of those four components has a specific grantee.
    - 3-5 year grants
    - Goal is to help grantees become self-sufficient organizations within the state of Idaho over the 3-5 years.
    - There is a serious expectation of performance with each grantee and ability to meet specific metrics.
  - Purpose: Team Rubicon provide veterans and first responders the opportunity to continue to serve through deployment/missions to disaster areas.
    - Allows veterans to use their military skills to continue serving their community and country.
    - Assisted after Houston Flooding and Ecuador Earthquakes
  - Social Connection: Team Red, White, & Blue
    - Provides veterans an opportunity to stay active and fit and build camaraderie with individuals who have a shared experience and values.
  - Education: Guild Education (Alison Garrow provided this portion of the brief) <http://www.mission43.org/education/>
    - Guild Education works with veterans, service-members, & spouses to help them accomplish the academic requirements for the careers they wish to pursue.

- Guild Education has partnered with four universities to meet this objective:
  - Colorado State University's Global Campus
  - Bellevue University
  - Brandman University (part of the Chapman University System)
  - Western Governors University
- Additionally, Guild Education has partnered with additional academic resources:
  - Straighter Line – <https://www.straighterline.com/>
  - Saylor – <https://www.saylor.org/>
- Employment: Hire Heroes USA (Tony Torres provided this portion of the brief)
  - Tony Torres is the manager for the Idaho Area of Hire Heroes USA
  - Empowers veterans and spouses with employment success. Assist with resume building, connect with employers, help improve interview skills, provide workshops, etc.
  - Nationally contributed to 3600 hires last year, and has a goal of 6500 hires this year. Well on the way to meeting that goal, averaging 120 hires per week nationally.
  - In Idaho, goal is 250 registrations and 50 hires. Have already met the registration goal and fully expect to surpass the hiring goal.

Brent Ferro – US Department of Labor

- Compliance regarding Veterans Preference has been outstanding.
  - In previous six months, there hasn't been the need for a single investigation regarding violation of veteran's preference.

- US Department of Labor has a Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program  
<https://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/hvrp/>
- The Idaho State Department of Transportation and Department of Labor have partnered through the Ladders of Opportunity Initiative On-the-Job Training/Supportive Service
  - This program will provide a six to ten week long training course to become certified heavy equipment operators.
  - Trainees can expect \$25-\$30 per hour jobs upon completion of training and certification.