

Veterans Event Committee Meeting 21 August 2023

Core Stakeholders Present

1. Elliott Madl (Region 1 SMVF Navigator, Region Ten Community Service Board),
2. MacKenzie Heidelberg (District Coordinator, The office of Representative Abigail Spanberger, 7th District, Virginia),
3. Angela Jameson (Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, Suicide Prevention Program, Central Virginia VA Healthcare System, Massaponax CBOC, VISN6),
4. Anthony Barns (Military & Veterans Affairs Director, The office of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, 10th District, Virginia),
5. Jeff Say (Manager of Community Engagement, UVA Health Culpeper Medical Center),
6. Scott Bennett (Board Member, representing Madison County, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services),
7. Tom Pratt, Board Member, representing Orange County, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services),
8. Jim LaGrafte (Executive Director, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services),
9. and Tammy Keaton (Executive Assistant of Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services).

Minutes

Jim opened the meeting by affirming the purpose of the meeting which is to begin brainstorming on the event that was suggested during the July 27th Veterans Administration Planning Workshop. He provided a little more information on Elliot's role within CSB Region 10, but also supporting all CSBS with Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF).

Sponsorship. Jim shared that he has access to finances for the event, advertisement of the event, incentives, etc.

Elliot shared that he is in the process of planning a similar event and would be happy to share information to help as this event gets further along. In his experience, when the focus has been on the family, they are often the ones who get the Veteran to take action.

Locking down a date. Scott Bennett recommended locking down a date as one of the most important first steps. He shared that Iraq Freedom and Enduring Freedom Veterans work on weekdays and it would be ideal to hold the event on a Saturday.

Jim is guessing that it will take at least three to six months to plan an event like this, suggested holding off until after the holidays, and proposed end of February or beginning of March. Anthony suggested that it might be easier to advertise if planed around another event or awareness theme. Elliott provided some significant days in February and March:

Feb 4 USO Birthday, Mar 15 American Legion Birthday, Mar 25 Medal of Honor Day, and Mar 29 Vietnam Veterans Day

Jeff also added that CRI has Mardi Gras later in the month and CulpeperCon is planned for March 9. He recommended checking with the local chambers to see what other events are

planned so we aren't in competition with something large.

Support for Service Offerings at the Event. Scott also advocated that it is important to have the right amount of support representatives to help support the services we will have available there (Applications, Registrations, Claims Process, PACT Act [Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics] Process, etc.).

RSVP List and Setting Benchmarks Recommendation. Anthony recommended this out of a lessons-learned from one of his events (VHA & 13 organizations were represented), not to curtail people from coming but to gain an expectation of what to prepare. MacKenzie shared that she is aware of colleagues using EventBright for such things.

Naming the Event. Tom provided some thoughts about not being a fan of the term “Fair” and envisioning this more as a “Conference”. Anthony shared some information about a Multi-Speaker Conference held in Northern Shenandoah Valley Community at Shenandoah University in 2019/2020, which had speakers talking about different topics throughout the day. This model would maximize participation.

9:00 AM – Gathering, Breakfast, Coffee & Check-In (Registration)
10:00 AM – Keynote Speaker, or Several Topics and Panelists,
11:00 AM - Town Hall (followed by Q&A)
12:00 PM – Lunch
1:00 PM – Breakout Sessions, Workshops, etc.
4:00/5:00 PM – Closeout

Breakfast & Lunch. Jim suggested coffee and donuts for Check-In, having light snacks on tables during breaks, between sessions, and a simple boxed lunch. Anthony shared that Mission Barbeque has been a great resource for them, often donating to the cause, and they advertise for free as well, having a great reach into the Veteran community.

Breakouts could include. ”How to ...” is really what the Veteran and Veteran Family are trying to find out.

- Family Supports
 - Caregiver Supports
 - Transitioning Services
 - CSB VA Services
 - Mental Health Supports
 - Transportation Supports
 - Housing Supports
 - Federal VA Services
 - Virginia State VA Services
 - Claim Supports
 - Benefit Supports
- *Perhaps solicit topics of interest from Veterans who might want to attend on what they want to hear about.

Speakers. Anthony would be able to reach out and coordinate the National Services Officers from the VSO. Tom suggested that because we are so close to Washington DC, it wouldn't be far-fetched to invite the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or if he is not available, a dignitary, or one of his designees. This is the level of attention we need for our geographical area.

Location. There was some discussion about the ideal locations and everyone seemed to agree that in Culpeper, Germanna Community College or the Daniel Technology Center would be the best places. Jim said that he can reach out to them.

Inside the Event. Tom cautioned that if the event has more to do about handing out brochures then he would suspect it would not be very well attended, but if it's informative and educational, where

people can get some questions answered then people will want to come. It was recommended to invite someone from DOD Transitioning Service to be part of this conversation as a proactive means to connect the active military personnel who will be transitioning into our community as Veterans. The State, Local, and Central Office VA, someone from DC, and someone from DOD Transitioning (Belvoir or Quantico) would be a great blend of speakers to have present.

Vendor Area (on the side). Tom thought it would be a good idea to have tables off to the side for information and giveaways that people could visit on breaks, during lunch, and during transition times.

Breakout Sessions. Tom recommended that the VBA would play a large part in this area as well as the Central Office Community Care Giver Office. Could be that one of the presenters would be present to help answer questions and receive feedback at this time. Often times when Veterans ask questions they don't get answers, or they try what was given to them and it didn't work.

Action Items. Jim will put together a loose schedule and reach out to Germanna.

Everyone else, send Jim (and copy Tammy Keaton) your recommendations on:

- 1) The information or message of the keynote speaker.
- 2) Names of keynote speakers or speakers and their area(s) of expertise.
- 3) Breakout session topics.
- 4) Vendors to invite for the side tables.
- 5) Volunteers to help run the event.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 PM.