

Veterans Event Planning Committee Meeting 25 September 2023

Present

1. Steven A. Jones, Sr., Retired Marine Combat Veteran with 20+ Years of Service, former Virginia Department of Corrections Veterans Coordinator
2. Angela Jameson, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, Suicide Prevention Program, Central Virginia VA Healthcare System, Massaponax CBOC, VISN6
3. Anthony Barns, Military & Veterans Affairs Director, The office of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, 10th District, Virginia
4. Jeff Say, Manager of Community Engagement, UVA Health Culpeper Medical Center
5. Scott Bennett, Board Member, representing Madison County, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services
6. Tom Pratt, Board Member, representing Orange County, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services
7. Jim LaGraffe, Executive Director, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services
8. Tammy Keaton, Executive Assistant, Encompass Community Supports, formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services

Invited: Elliott Madl (Region 1 SMVF Navigator, Region Ten Community Service Board), and MacKenzie Heidelmark (District Coordinator, The office of Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, 7th District, Virginia),

Minutes

The meeting began at 10:04 AM. Introductions went around the table and online for new attendees. As a recap, Jim shared that this group along with the larger group that will be meeting on Thursday, September 28, at 10 a.m., started to meet a couple of months ago. (The first meeting was on July 27th, 2023). The purpose of the meeting was to come up with a plan, form some ideas, and a get consensus on bringing and sustaining Veterans Affairs/Administration benefits and services locally to serve our five-county catchment area.

Encompass Community Supports, formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services Board reached out to various organizations with a vested interest in our area which included Central Virginia VA Health Care System, Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF), Culpeper Baptist Church, Reformation Lutheran Church Culpeper, Hero's Bridge, UVA Health Culpeper Medical Center, Mental Health Association, The PATH Foundation, The office of Representative Abigail Spanberger, The office of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, and Region Ten Community Service Board.

By the second meeting Martinsburg VA Medical Center, Virginia Department of Veterans Services, Virginia Department of Veteran Services, VA Health Care Systems – Martinsburg, and Virginia Veteran & Family Support Program joined the group.

Two goals came out of the last meeting:

Goal 1. A short-term goal: To make contact with our veterans, is to have a local event in which servicemen and their families will be invited to attend a one-day conference, learn about benefits,

access to benefits, services, access to services, and have an opportunity to begin application processes as well as receive information, lunch, and access to various local supports.

Goal 2. A long-term goal: The vision of this group is that at a minimum, veterans have local access to primary care and basic mental health (a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC)), case management/care coordination, and audiology services.

Update on Goal 2. There has since been some progress made on identifying a care coordination resource through Caleb Johnson, the Northern Regional Director of Virginia Veteran and Family Support within the Virginia Department of Veteran Services, for our area. The CBOC is a longer-term project.

At the last Event Planning Meeting, we had gotten to a clear understanding of what the event should look like and Jim was tasked to reach out to Germanna to find out if they could hold an event of this size.

Germanna. They have their Event Conference Space available on Sat. March 2nd available. It includes a large meeting room and breakout rooms from 8 a.m. to 8 pm. They have a reduced non-profit rate of \$3,235.25. Jim is aware of funds available for the event through the Regional CSB.

☆ Everyone agreed to move forward with the venue.

☆ Jim to confirm the process for pulling down the funding through Regional CSB.

Event Name/Budget: We will need to decide on the official name and budget.

Potential Breakout Session Candidate. Jeff Say shared that there is a doctor in their cancer care, Dr. Patel, who is an Army veteran and is very interested in being part of this event. He offered to speak about his experiences and about the importance of helping veterans get the benefits they need and tie it into cancer care, his specialty. Many veterans are facing issues with cancer. Perhaps this could be a breakout session or another speaking engagement opportunity.

Scott agreed he would be a good breakout session and added that many of the veterans he comes into contact with are Vietnam war vets, many of whom have been exposed to Agent Orange. Any information we can give them on Agent Orange would be beneficial.

Keynote Speaker. A keynote speaker is generally short, sweet, and motivational as a kick-off. In Anthony's experience, if we are looking for something that is both motivational and useful, he recommended regional or local VA representation to be the keynote speaker. These typically have more military experience and relate better to the audience. Someone who can hit to national and local levels. They speak more on a local level rather than a bureaucratic level. May even look at someone in the five-county region who would be able to not only represent the national level but also hit home on the local level. Someone who can carry a room will be critical.

There was some discussion on ideas for keynote speakers of which the following names were discussed;

- Former Commander of the American Legion
- Brigadier General John Rose, Vietnam Commemoration Committee, the department within DOD that presents the pinning ceremonies. Their Commandant and head speaker is a retired Major General. He is phenomenal and can speak to not only the Vietnam population but the population at large. He served from the Vietnam era through the beginning of the Gulf War. Brings the pinning aspect for those who have not been pinned yet, for Silver

Star and Metal of Honor recipients, and there are pins for families as well which will bring family participation. Could bring another breakout session.

- National Level within the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Ron Johnson, Director of the Richmond VA Medical Center, is at the top of Tom's list. Ron oversees services for all of the counties except Fauquier. He is a diligent leader, compassionate, and engaged in the local community and with rural area initiatives. He is very engaged with what is happening at VISN 6 as well as the national level. Ask him to stay most of the day, answer any questions, and be with his staff.

Possibilities Include. It was suggested that we perhaps have both Brigadier General John Rose and Ron Johnson since we are going to have a daylong event, we will have the time. We could also have someone speak during the lunch hour.

- Tom suggested inviting the Mayor of Culpeper, Frank Reaves Jr., or a representative of him, to say a few words, perhaps either in the opening or closing remarks.
- Jim suggested inviting Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, to come and do a welcome. She wasn't in the Armed Services but she was a CIA officer and understand service. Perhaps she could be part of the pinning ceremony.

Be mindful that;

- we want to highlight the efforts of the CSB/ Encompass Community Supports, the community, and everyone involved;
- we will have veterans there who are receiving services from the Richmond VA Medical Center as well as veterans who are not;
- we may have veterans there who are mistrustful of the government and might be willing to step up;
- we will have many different periods of service, we still have WWII, Korean War, Viet Nam, Peace-time, Gulf War (1990 to today) which encompass many combat veterans among us, that are getting older;
- we will have veterans dealing with the effects of Agent Orange, and other toxic substances, and interested in the PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act);
- we have three VA Centers that service our area (Richmond, Martinsburg-WVA, and DC);
- we need to close the gap in our community.

Everyone liked the idea that we start the day with something motivational to set the day and the pinning ceremony is a great way to do that. The number of veterans known in our catchment area is 14,777. If could get 200 veterans to come to this event, it would be a good day.

Anthony asked what the format of Ron Johnson's session would be. He cautioned that in his experience, having two speakers back to back tends to lose the attention of the attendees. He suggested that Ron Johnson perhaps be part of a Q&A panel, answering questions for participants. The veterans would submit their questions when entering so that they could be filtered. Steven suggested that we could provide Ron with a few topics to speak on and then open the floor up for the Q&A. Jeff suggested that if it's possible to collect questions ahead of time, it would allow for the vetting of the questions as well as allow Ron to prepare the answers. If we're trying to get

engagement, having an online portal for veterans to submit their questions would be ideal. Jim said that we could also write our own questions to make sure we don't run out of time. Tom added that preparing the questions this way would also create an environment that is not a complaint session, we want it to be formal, educational, and give the impression we care about our veterans and caregivers, etc.

*For the Q&A, Anthony suggested that we keep in mind that there will be veterans currently aligned to VA Centers in Richmond, Martinsburg-WVA, and DC, based on where they live, and questions may be specific to those Centers. If Ron is from Richmond Medical Center, it may be a challenge to answer a question that falls outside his area.

Questions. If we can get the questions early enough it could help us develop the breakout sessions.

Scott shared that he had attended one of Congresswoman Wexton's events and the most sought-after exhibit was for the Virginia Department of Military Services. He encouraged us to have them at this event as well.

Anthony mentioned Commissioner Gade, who is the commissioner of Veterans Services in Virginia, is very engaged with events like this. He'll make sure we'll get the entire services that we need. In a previous event, they helped provide ten of their people as well as Virginia Veterans and Family Services (VFS). The Virginia Department of Veteran Services (DVS), and their Veterans Services Officers (VSO), are a big draw because they sign people up on hand for services. VSOs sign up to be their Power of Attorney (POA) and then represent them in claims services with the VA. In some cases, they were doing claims on hand (putting in an intent to file). Having the Veterans Benefits Administration (Veterans Affairs/Federal) there could be beneficial if they are willing to provide individuals to run claims but also to check on statuses and things of this nature.

Anthony's communication team has recorded sessions before making the video available to view later in case people want to spend time with an exhibit, they can go back and watch the session.

Tom, in preparing to leave the call, shared that with regard to having one of the Breakout Sessions be informational about the Department of Veteran Services, providing 'how to' and 'education' then that would be acceptable. He cautioned the group to veer away from processing claims, checking the status of claims at this event, that it would take away from what we are trying to do. He encouraged us to provide information to individuals and encourage them to do it on their own and seek other avenues to support it. He knows the local veterans, and how they are eager to submit claims, but our focus is on providing educational information, getting out the message that we are a community and we are here to serve our veterans, we are advocating for the best care for them, and have brought together these people to be here for them. There is an appropriate time and place to process claims, check the status of claims, etc. but this event is not it.

Anthony added that the VBA (Veterans Benefits Administration) doesn't typically send a team to do that, but he was referring to a PACT Act-specific event where there was a deadline for claims. Scott said that he could see it both ways as educational and active and that every time he has left an educational-only event he walked away with a bag full of flyers and an empty feeling. If the Department of Veteran Services could be there to process claims (put in an intent to file), at least something would be done. Anthony clarified that they actually can't process a full claim off-site like that. Jim agreed that our hope for veterans who have not yet started the process is that they can put their name in the process instead of walking away with a flyer that tells them how to get their name in the process.

Anthony added that one benefit of doing an intent to file is that they would then have twelve full months from that date to file the rest of the claim and it's very simple to do. And then if they can leave there with the contact information of the name they know they'll need to follow up with or have those people there to be able to schedule a follow-up appointment with them, so they can file the rest of the claim, then it becomes a whole other ballgame.

To be clear, the Breakout Sessions will need to be completely independent of the exhibitors. We will have the educational part of the breakout session while having the exhibitors there to provide the service. It's not just DVS, there are Veteran Services Organizations who have VSOs that can do this on-site; DVS, American Legion, VFW, any of them that have a VSO.

Scott and Jim, also preparing to leave the meeting asked the remaining members to develop the list of exhibitors.

Possible Breakout Session

- PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act)
- Veteran and Family Support
- Virginia Department of Military Services
- Peer to Peer Suicide Prevention Training (Angela Jameson's team).
- Advance Care Planning Group, goes over things like end-of-life planning, creating a plan for living alone, and things like this. Can also fill out forms on-site.

Exhibits/Exhibitors to begin reaching out to:

Angela provided an internal list she has been working on:

1. Community Care – The VA provides care to Veterans through community providers when the VA cannot provide the care needed. Community care is based on specific eligibility requirements, the availability of VA care, and the needs and circumstances of individual Veterans.
2. Caregiver Support Program (CSP) - The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Caregiver Support Program (CSP) offers clinical services to caregivers of eligible and covered Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. The program's mission is to promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our Nation's Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.
3. Enrollment Eligibility (VA health care benefits) - Health Administration Services

Let Angela know if we do or do not want any of the following:

4. Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) - The VA's Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) is committed to helping Veterans, their partners, and VA staff who are impacted by IPV. If you, or someone you know could be experiencing and/or using IPV - help is available.
5. Patient Advocates - The Patient Advocacy Program is for veterans and family members receiving care at Veterans Health Administration facilities. It's part of a "treatment team" concept that addresses issues at every stage of care. Available At All VHA Facilities.
6. Suicide Prevention (Angela Jameson's team). The Program Manager for Recovery and Local Recovery Coordinators are in charge of Peer Support Specialists.

7. Virginia’s Women Veterans Program (VWVP) provides access to community resources to educate, unify, and empower Virginia’s women veterans, who have served in the military in all eras; by ensuring they receive timely yet appropriate transition and benefits support/employment and education outreach; health and community advocacy.
8. Chaplin Services
9. VA Homeless Programs - The VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans.
Angela will send the contact list except she doesn’t have a contact for the Homeless team. They have a different process and she is still working on this one.
10. Heros Bridge
11. Domiciliary Program (Martinsburg/VISN 5); We can work with them for provisions of Homelessness, Recovery, Rehabilitation, and In-Patient Mental Health Services. – Anthony
12. Virginia Regional Transit, Mike Socha – Jeff Say
13. Voltran – Jeff Say
14. Operation First Response, Local Law Enforcement
15. UVA - Jeff Say would like to have a space for the Hospital
16. Samantha Strong, DEI Program Coordinator and Community Specialist | UVA Physicians Group, Primary care side, Add to Thursday’s meeting.
17. DSS Virginia Department of Social Services
18. Culpeper National Cemetery – Anthony
19. Advance Care Planning Group - Angela

Collaboration. Anthony asked if we had a central online collaboration platform such as a Google Doc, where everyone had access and could add thoughts and status, etc. Unfortunately, we do not. Tammy K will continue to try and find a solution for this. Perhaps since the VA has higher restrictions on access than everyone else, someone from the VA could set up a shared space and then invite us. Anthony can check with his coms people.

Final Thoughts. Anthony mentioned a couple of events that are coming up.

<p>VA Mental Health Summit Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023 9 AM to 3 PM Martinsburg VA Medical Center Mental Health Summit Facebook</p>	<p>Veterans Fair/ Resource Event Wednesday, Sept 27 3 PM – 6 PM Purcellville Library *Anthony is an exhibitor</p>
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Anthony will be able to bring back some information on what worked, and what didn’t work, for best practices. Not sure of the turnout, tend to be saturated with events like this. He will send it to Tammy to help get the word out, and perhaps list it on our website events page as well.

Transportation. Steven shared that veterans may need rides getting to and from the event. Jeff inquired as to is we can use our vans for some of the veterans who meet the aging criteria. Tammy will bring this to Jim for his input. Steven volunteered to help pick up some veterans. Anthony mentioned the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) in Martinsburg. He will ask about it. They also have valet vehicles as well.

Steven asked about the participation of Veterans who are incarcerated. We are not sure at this time as it was the team's understanding that when a veteran is incarcerated they forfeit their benefits.

Angela shared that they have the Veteran Justice Outreach and also the Healthcare for Reentry teams. If incarcerated, they do forfeit those benefits, but once released and are returning citizens then they will need help reapplying and reinstating their benefits. Steven is in touch with the community corrections side for those who are coming out and he would like to get them in touch with them and get them connected.

Angela would like to stay the point of contact for all those she listed and be the liaison of information between this group and them.

Visit Germanna. Get an assessment of the space in order to plan how many exhibitor tables, space for sitting down versus stopping by, and spaces for breakouts. Can they provide exhibitor tables, how big they are? The questions may also help narrow it down.

The following items were developed:

1. Add a Questionnaire. Will need to explore a polling mechanism for the audience about topics, sub-topics, and interests. If polling isn't an option, talk with stakeholders in your area.
2. A list of Core Speakers; will need to recruit and confirm relevant speakers.
3. A draft list of Exhibitors; will need to begin reaching out to recruit and confirm.
4. A need for local Transportation; will need to begin reaching out to recruit and confirm.

Action Items from this meeting are as follows:

1. Jim will secure the reservation with Germanna as the venue.
2. We will ask a local person to do the welcome.
3. Anthony and Jim will reach out and invite Brigadier General John Rose
4. Tom and Jim will meet to talk about how to get Ron Johnson or someone like this to come in. Angela provided some information in the chat box: For formally requesting speaking requests/attendance for Director Johnson, official requests go through Public Affairs: VHARICPublicAffairs@va.gov. She encouraged them to put in the email the details of what we are interested in having him do and talk about. Tom also has a phone number for him. They will make the formal request and then can follow up with a phone call.
5. Further consideration of what the breakout sessions will be.
6. Come up with a list of Exhibitors.
7. Identify someone to start reaching out to the American Legion, VFW, and the list to make sure they can be on board. Scott has a meeting with his American Legion Post and will

mention this to them.

8. Anthony can check with his coms people on a collaboration platform for this group.
9. Anthony will contact the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) in Martinsburg to inquire about them helping out for this event.
10. Angela, could you provide the contact information for the Veteran Justice Outreach and also the Healthcare for Reentry teams?
11. Visit Germanna to vet the space.

Next Meeting. This group will report back to the larger group on Thursday, Sept. 28, at 10 AM.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

*Please note that anyone may join this group if they want to be part of the event planning efforts, please contact tkeaton@ecsva.org if you'd like to be added to the invite.

Acronyms List

CBOC	Community-Based Outpatient Clinic
CSP	Caregiver Support Program
DVS	Virginia Department of Veteran Services
IPVAP	Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program
PACT Act	Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act
POA	Power of Attorney
SMVF	Service Members, Veterans, and their Families
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VFS	Virginia Veterans and Family Services
VSO	Veterans Services Officers
VWVP	Virginia's Women Veterans Program

Event Summary

Goals:

- Understanding attendee wants, needs, and interests.
- Connecting with attendees.
- Helping attendees connect with each other.

Event: A one-day conference

Official Name: TBD

Date: Saturday, March 2nd 2024

Venue: Germanna Event Conference Space

Budget: TBD

Agenda/Schedule: . DRAFT

Time	Track 1 Conference	Track 2 Services and Supports Exhibitors on site Running throughout the day.
9:30 AM	Arrive, Check-in, Coffee/Donuts, Get seated	TBD
9:45 AM	Opening Remarks	
10:00 AM	Keynote Brigadier General John Rose & Pinning Ceremony TBD	
11:00 AM	Facilitated Discussion with Q&A Ron Johnson or National Level, Department of Veterans Affairs TBD	
12:00 PM	Lunch / Exhibitors	
12:50 PM	Welcome Back / Overview	
1:00 PM	Breakout Sessions	
2:00 PM	Swap Breakout Sessions	
3:00 PM	Closeout Remarks	

Food:

Breakfast	Lunch	?
Coffee & Donuts	Anthony recommended Mission BBQ?	Refreshments/Water

Stakeholders:

- Attendees:Veterans and their families
- Prominent Speaker(s):TBD
- Breakout Session Speakers:TBD
- Volunteers/Event Staff:TBD
- Exhibitors:TBD
- Sponsors:TBD

Information to be made available at the conference:

- Agent Orange
- TBD

Transportation (to and from the event):

- Virginia Regional Transit TBD
- Voltran TBD

Other Items to consider for a conference setting:

- Speaker bios
- Gathering questions before the Q&A Sessions/Someone to vet them.
- A way to submit questions to speakers afterward?
- Do we plan the conference with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) capabilities?
- Conference name badges
- After the conference: Supplying contact information so that attendees can easily maintain the connections they made.
- Conference website; an 'About' page, the conference agenda, registration information, a link to ?, questionnaire/contact form, and other important information.
- Marketing: Social platforms, email marketing campaigns
- Media coverage, news outlets
- Security: Gone are the days when security was an afterthought / Loop security in early
- Post-event feedback plan
- Register attendees if possible
- Video record the speaking sessions for those who miss them by being in another area of the event.