

# Veterans Administration Planning Workshop

Monday, 22 April 2024

## **Present.** *(In Order by First Name)*

1. Andy Johnston, Director of Programs, The PATH Foundation (serving Fauquier, Rappahannock, and Culpeper Counties),
2. Angela Jameson, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, Suicide Prevention Program, Central Virginia VA Healthcare System, Massaponax CBOC, VISN6, and 15+ year Veteran,
3. Anthony Barns, Military & Veterans Affairs Director, The office of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, 10th District,
4. Ben Shaw, Regional Director, Central Region, Virginia Veteran & Family Support Program,
5. Elizabeth Leach, Strategic Planner, Martinsburg VA Medical Center,
6. James (“Jay”) Pinsky, Commander of the Harold J. Davis American Legion Post 247,
7. Jeff Say, Manager of Community Engagement, UVA Health Culpeper Medical Center,
8. Jennifer Sztalkoper, Ph.D., North Regional Assistant Manager, Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program, Virginia Department of Veterans Services,
9. Jim LaGrafte, Executive Director, Encompass Community Supports (formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services), Facilitator,
10. Kim Baskerville, Program Director, Staff Sargent Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (Veterans Services), Volunteers of America Chesapeake & Carolinas,
11. Renee Norden, Executive Director, Mental Health Association (MHA),
12. Scott Bennett, former Board Member (Representing Madison County, Encompass Community Supports, Chairman of the Board of Madison Department of Social Services, former Veterans Service Officer and Commander of the Madison American Legion Post 157, and 25+ year Veteran,
13. Steven A. Jones, Sr., Retired Marine Combat Veteran of 20+ Years of Service, former Virginia Department of Corrections Veterans Coordinator,
14. Tammy Barboza, Director, Communications and Public Relations, Encompass Community Supports
15. Tammy Keaton, Executive Assistant, Encompass Community Supports,
16. Tom Pratt, Board Member (Representing Orange County), Encompass Community Supports, a 15+ year peace-time and war-time Veteran, 100 % permanent-disabled.

## **Invited.** *(In Order by First Name)*

Anthony Swann, Peer Services Director, Virginia Department of Veterans Services,  
Brad Hales, Pastor, Board Member, representing Culpeper County, Encompass Community Supports (formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services),  
Brandi Jancaitis, Director, Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program,  
Cory Will, Former Director of Peer Recovery Services at Encompass Community Supports,  
Bruce Campbell, Warrenton VFW, Post Services Officer,  
Dan Carlton, Pastor, Culpeper Baptist Church,  
Elisha Jones, Lead Patient Advocate, Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS), Richmond,  
Elliott Madl, DBHDS Region 1 Navigator for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF), serving the Region Ten Community Service Board, Charlottesville, a Marine, having served in Afghanistan,  
Janelle Huffman, Community Health Worker (CHW), Director of Programs, of Hero’s Bridge (a Veteran-serving nonprofit with a focus exclusively on Veterans 65 and older),  
Jennifer Kelley, Community Engagement Partnership Coordinator, Community-Based Interventions-Suicide Prevention Program, VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Martinsburg WV, VISN5,  
Ken Allensworth, Medical Center Director, Martinsburg VA Medical Center,  
Lori Medley, Commander of the Culpeper American Legion,  
MacKenzie Heidelberg, District Coordinator, The office of Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger,  
Molly Brooks, CEO & Founder, of Hero’s Bridge (a Veteran-serving nonprofit with a focus exclusively on Veterans 65 and older),  
Samantha Strong, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Program Coordinator and Community Specialist at UVA Physicians Group,  
Stephen Mosher, Chief Engineer, Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS) in Richmond (works very closely with the Associate and Executive Director to help plan for expansion projects on the local campus or within the community areas. He is also very involved in the Health Care Center (HCC), and the CBOC expansions that are currently planned).

The meeting began at 3:32 PM.

Jim LaGrafte thanked everyone for their time for the meeting today. He asked if there was anyone new to the group. Jay Pinsky introduced himself as a military veteran who is not serving as the Commander of the Harold J. Davis American Legion Post 247 out of Remmington.

**Debriefing of the Service Members, Veterans, and Families Mini-Conference.** Jim shared that he has received nothing but good feedback on the event. Scott Bennett shared that he also heard good feedback from the Midson County community members who came to the event. Jeff Say reported that the employees he spoke to who ran a table there said they were able to help people, as one example he recalled a widow of a veteran who was able to get her husband's benefits due to the connection she made at the conference. Jennifer Sztalkoper commended that the event was phenomenal from start to finish. Even her experience in working with this group over the past several months putting the event together was so well structured compared to other community events she has worked with. The event was also well attended. The Department of Veterans Services, Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program is now utilizing a Resource Specialist in the Warrenton office and from a staffing perspective, the Encompass Community Supports team made her feel very welcome even before she started. She's been there for a little over a month, is getting calls, doing site visits, and keeping busy. Jennifer Thanked Jim and the staff. Jim acknowledged and thanked Tammy Barboza for her attention to all the details and Tammy Keaton for assisting with the volunteers.

Video. Please visit <https://cmn.viebit.com/player.php?hash=EeKM6stivoshf2X7> to view the filming of the event and the link is also posted on our website. Jim mentioned that a Vietnam-era Veteran recently contacted the Culpeper Media Network because he was watching it and reached out to find out how to be part of a pinning ceremony and get a pin. We'll reach back out to him.

Angela Jameson shared that the feedback she received from numerous VA groups who manned tables during the event said how impressed they were about how well-structured everything was and how pleased they were with the turnout. They were all very excited about it and already wondering if it would happen again next year. Jim observed that people were a little worn down towards the end of the day which was to be expected, and there were some timing suggestions.

**Where does this group go from here?** We started with a modest goal of getting people together to begin talking. We were able to bring two specific employees into this area where we didn't have any when we began; One Resource Specialist based out of the Warrenton office and one who is targeting Veteran Suicide and Overdose Response for the region. We completed the Service Members, Veterans, and Families Mini-Conference which made a lot of information available to our communities. Throughout this group's discussions, one of the original needs that was recognized was to get local resources, so we have the two positions mentioned above but also the goal is to have at the very least local primary care, basic behavioral health screenings and assessments, and audiology services within our five-county area. **How we get this and how this group moves forward are the next steps.**

CVEB (Community Veterans Engagement Board). We've heard from a couple of community leaders about the CVEB model. There have been a few community members who have stepped forward and said they are interested in leading it. While Jim was happy to get this group together, Encompass Community Supports is a Behavioral Health agency, and we have a role to play however we aren't a Veterans organization. This is a good time for us to support those members of our community who are interested in establishing a CVEB for our five-county area, to take the lead locally to begin pushing for those next steps.

Jay Pinsky shared that he also serves on the VA Regional Taskforce which partners with the Fauquier Mental Health Association. On Saturday, June 22, they are hosting a VA First SAVE training at the American Legion at 9 am. <https://fb.me/e/3pn39Ciu9>. Please share this within your networks. They are also renovating an older building on their property located right next to Moo-Thru on RT29. They are renovating the building for several purposes; to create a couple of local offices, a gaming center safehouse for younger veterans in the community who are dealing with mental health concerns to relax and for comradery and connection, two private meeting rooms that veterans can use to get a variety of help/support for themselves and/or with their families, and a telehealth set up. There is a huge resistance to getting mental health help. Mental health treatment and the VA are barriers. This facility will help connect veterans to professionals in our community to help remove some of the social and mental barriers. They are working with a local contractor to gain a cost estimate and looking for partners to help fund the project. The hope is that these partners can offer their services on a schedule within the building at no cost.

This has been a good place for members of this group to share information on what we do locally. As this group has been meeting, it has frequently discussed ways that the VA has or could have, a strong presence in our community, and what some of the pathways are to get some things that are missing. We are always going to need to try and find spaces to facilitate support(s) because we all know that stigma is a huge barrier as well.

**Is this group supportive of the CVEB model and supporting it locally?** It was confirmed by all that this is the path this group would like to move forward with. Jim has had a few individuals come forward expressing their interest in leading the efforts. Jim inquired if there was anyone else who wanted to be part of the leadership part of the group. Angela Jameson conveyed that she is happy to meet with them and support them in structuring it, as coalition work is part of her expertise and she has helped stand up other CVEB initiatives. Tom Pratt asked to have his name included. Scott Bennett supports it but is unable to lead at this time. Steven Jones would like to be part of it but also not in a leadership role.

**Final Remarks.** Jim shared that he will put a meeting together with those who will be part of the leadership team for the CVEB development and then take a step back from leading the group and fall more into a support role as well. He will seek to support that meeting administratively and then turn it over to them. They can meet with Angela Jameson to actualize the next steps. Anthony Barnes also conveyed that he is happy to offer his advisory support as he also has experience in standing up two CVEBs from a logistical standpoint, on how to do it and is also happy to coordinate any contact with the existing CVEBs so that they may offer their wisdom and support as well.

In closure, Jim thanked everyone.

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 PM.