



STATE OF WASHINGTON
VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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Meeting Minutes

Meeting attended by	Kathy Hobbs, Don Fenton, Merl Gorton, Don Schack, Owen McCurdy, Lloyd Burroughs, Roy Compton, Rob Lougee, Gary Lysne, Bob Schwartz, Tito Medina, Richard Marcelynas, Gary Pearson
Absent from meeting (Excused)	Oria Berndt, Francis Jeffery
Date	September 11, 2013
Time	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Location	Spokane Veterans Center, Spokane, WA
Call to Order	Meeting was called to order by Kathy Hobbs – current VAAC Chair. Don Schack gave the invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance
Welcome & Introductions:	Kathy Hobbs – VAAC Chair and Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, Director, WDVA welcome everyone and made introductions.
Election of VAAC Chair & Vice-Chair	Kathy opened the floor for nominations of VAAC Chair and Vice Chair. Don Schack nominated Owen McCurdy for the Chair and Richard Marcelynas as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations so Kathy opened up the floor for voting. All VAAC members present unanimously voted Owen McCurdy as the incoming VAAC Chair and Richard Marcelynas as VAAC Vice Chair
Areas Discussed:	<p>Spokane Vet Center – Joe Dumlao Joe gave a synopsis of what kind of services is offered by the Vet Center – The Vet Center offers readjustment counseling to eligible veterans and their families in the effort to make a successful transition from military to civilian life – the counseling service can be an individual and group for veterans and their families, it could be for family counseling for military related issues, bereavement counseling for families who experience death in the family, military sexual trauma counseling and referral, substance abuse assessment and referral, employment assessment and referral and screening and referral for medical issues i.e., TBI, depression, etc.</p> <p>Homeless Veterans Services – John Davis John Davis works for the US Department of Veterans Affairs and works closely in helping homeless veterans in Spokane, Idaho and Montana. John works closely with community partners to be able to provide short-term or transitioning housing for eligible homeless veterans and their families. They are able to this by providing HUD and VASH vouchers to supplement housing costs for homeless, unemployed and low-income veterans. John mentioned that there will be 3 stand downs – Colville, Wenatchee and Moses Lake. His organization participates on this stand down events.</p>

Veterans Court – Tim Sigler

Veterans Court is designed to divert defendants from the traditional criminal justice system into rehabilitative services. The Veterans Court is the first in Spokane and one of the few of its kind in WA State. This type of court is part of a growing movement that started in Buffalo, NY this court system was started to divert veteran offenders into treatment for psychological problems resulting from their military service. This type of court was prompted by a realization that many soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in which there are not traditional fronts and a constant threat of violence may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, substance abuse or other behavioral health conditions. The effort in establishing this type of court in Spokane was led by Justice Peterson a retired Reserve officer who coordinated with Spokane VA, the prosecutor's office, public defender's office, probation department and other legal, military and social service agencies. This form of court has been successful. Veterans that found themselves in this court received the necessary counseling/treatment they needed. They are also required to attend at least four monthly forum in which veterans discusses relevant issues. Each forum that they attend they have one month knocked off the time he/she been ordered to spend in this program. According to Tim for the year 2013 there have been 600 veterans involved in the court system and this type of court system have save Spokane a total amount of \$2.1 million to date.

County Veterans Assistance Fund – Chuck Elmore

County VAF was established in 1952. For the past two years the County VAF has assisted an average of 6300 veterans in the Spokane County. Between January and August it had given a total of \$450,000 to veterans. The County VAF provides counseling and emergency financial aid to honorably discharge veterans, indigent veterans and their family for food, rent, gas, limited prescription assistance, bus passes, utilities, limited work clothing. County VAF also offers information services and assistance on variety of Veteran's benefits, referrals to other community resources for education, employment and counseling. Chuck encouraged everyone present that if they come across veterans and their families that need assistance to refer them to his office.

American Legion – Gary Roach

Gary is a service officer and his office is at the Spokane VA Center – he has assisted lot veterans and their families not only from Spokane but also veterans from Idaho and Montana file a claim with the Federal VA.

WA Department of Veterans Affairs – Alfie Alvarado-Ramos & Gary Condra

Alfie have shared WDVA's Vision, Mission and Goals – copies were provided to attendees. That all Washington veterans and their families are connected to the services and benefits they earned. There are five areas of focus: Outreach and Access, Quality Health Services, Education & Employment, Continuous Improvement and Exceptional Customer Service. Gary gave an update on the construction of the

	<p>fourth state veterans home on the grounds of the Walla Walla Medical Center. Dedication was done early summer and anticipating construction to start fall next year.</p>
<p>Issues Discussed</p>	<p>A Blue Water Vietnam veteran inquire if there is a website in existence that list of the navy vessels etc. that was or might have been exposed to agency orange. Rob Lougee – VAAC member provided the website and after the town hall meeting was able to show it to the veteran</p> <p>A woman veteran was concerned that the Spokane VA Medical center lack women providers as well as women service officers. A representative from Spokane VA addressed this issue and that the medical center is aware of this issue and they are trying their best to hire qualified providers. Rob Lougee again had given his number as he works at the VA Regional Office and asked the woman veteran to give him a call and he would be able to connect her with a woman service officer.</p> <p>Parking Issues at Spokane Medical Center – parking lot is always full and veterans are always struggling at finding parking – again the medical center is aware of this and finding solutions to address this issue</p> <p>Veterans Forum – the only type of veteran forum in the country. Veterans meet once a month to discuss the different issues they are facing. Average attendance has been at least 100 attendees – at this forum life skills classes are offered, readjustment classes, finances, etc. Mentors in this forum are volunteers and majority are veterans – the volunteers undergo to month long training. They are looking for volunteers right now and you don't have to be a vet to volunteer to be a mentor. During the forum, 25-30 community partners join this forums and majority of the time they fill in the gaps on the services that is needed to assist veterans and their families that are attending.</p>