



Kent County Veterans Services

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Minutes- 12/08/2022

Committee present: Mary Johnson, Melvin Bauman, Chris Kamps, Jill Hinton-Wolfe, Reginald Howard & Trish Torres.

Committee absent: Michael Blundell

Staff present: KCVS Manager- Martha Burkett(remote), KCVS VSO- Andrew LaPres, KCVS Clerk/Emergency Relief Coordinator- Amanda Lake

Public: Paul Ryan

1) Meeting called to order

- i. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee chair Mary Johnson.

2) Approval of Minutes

- i. Approved by Mel Bauman, Seconded by Chris Kamps

3) Pledge of Allegiance – Lead by KCVS VSO Andrew LaPres

4) Success Stories

- i. Mary- KCVS Rachel sent a feel-good story that came from one of her outreach activities during an art workshop at a care facility. Her and KCVS VSO Theresa Ergang worked with a 100-year-old attendee Betty who was full of sass. Her husband served during WWII and Betty worked in a factory managing 30 other military spouses creating parts for U Boats. She mentioned that she always wanted to paint and was so happy that they were there for the art workshop. Betty painted 5 pieces of art and said that they can come back anytime.
- ii. Reginald- He was at the MVE (Michigan Veterans Entrepreneur) Lab and was awarded \$500.00 for a showcase from his table set up. Also, with all the encouragement from the committee, Heroes Corner received their first grant. This was for over \$100,000 dollars, from the Grand Rapids Foundation. They will be able to hire someone to do their administration. Heroes Corner has already received the check, as the money needed to be issued before the end of December. With the grant money, they have paid their rent for 1 full year. He also met Miller Johnson through the MVE Lab, they will be doing their 501C for Heroes Corner Pro-Bono for them and that should be ready to be filed by January.

- iii. KCVS Martha- This one comes from Arbor circle. Their social workers engaged with 36 clients, 84 individual sessions, 5 group sessions and 7 family sessions this past month alone. They had one female veteran who had suffered from a lot of childhood trauma. She's been very stressed about going home for Thanksgiving to see her Mother. She has been spending time in group talking about how to set boundaries and communication. She went to her mother's for thanksgiving and had said that she had the best experience with her mother. She said that it was unbelievable to her that she was able to use her new skills and see such a positive change in the relationship with her mother.
- iv. Jill- I have a couple to share. I reached out to KCVS Veteran support coordinator Kenyon Vickery, with a veteran student of mine whose furnace went out. Kenyon was very helpful with connecting to her to some resources to help. Some were more helpful than others, so I will be talking to him about that more. Kenyon also reached out to me letting me know that one of the American Legion posts were looking to support a few families for the holidays. The veteran that had the issues with her furnace has 3 school aged kids, so she agreed to take part in this to help for the holidays. I also have 2 other students of mine that have families that we added to the list for the American Legion. Also, a few months ago Grand Valley invited me to do a Ted Talk. I can send an email after the meeting to everyone so you can view and share it. It is about the Art to being a Veteran and I have gotten some really positive feedback on it. I am just trying to get it out there and help more veterans.

5) Monthly Impact Report

- i. KCVS Andrew- For November, we had good numbers. We had 16 records requests, more than double what we did last month and triple what we did last November. KCVS did 24 fully developed claims which is good considering we were closed for 3 days due to the holiday. We had 120 face to face contacts, which was 25 more than we did the month prior and double what we did last year. We currently have 174 claims in development at the VA, which means that we are putting them in faster than they can award them. We had 18 claims awarded this month, a little lower than last month. With Soldier and Sailors Relief we had a huge increase last month with 13 applications being approved to help Veterans totaling almost \$14,000.
 - i. Mary- What was reasoning this month and what was the primary need for the SSR? Was it Food, Rent, Utilities?
 - ii. KCVS Mandi- It was primarily Utilities this month. We had a few rent assistance applications, but the primary need for this month for our veterans was utilities assistance.
- ii. KCVS Andrew- We also did 3 burials this month. Our phone contacts were about where they were last month, so that is pretty good. We did a lot of Meijer Food Vouchers last month. We have more than doubled it from last month. We are glad they are being used.

6) Manager Report

- i. KCVS Manager Martha- It is currently showing that we are negative 362%, the reasoning behind this is that the county hasn't added their \$300,000 yet. We are currently over on Project/Program costs and under on everything else. So, in the end it will be a wash and we will be all good come 12/31/2022.

7) Old Business

i. Jail Program

- i. KCVS Martha- We are working to bring our staff into the jail to help the inmates learn about what services are available to them from us with helping to locate their DD-214 and starting their claim work. All our staff's clearances have been approved so they're ready to start when we are able to go in. We are working on coordinating with Arbor circle therapist to go in and do the substance use and mental health evaluation. The initial start will be remote still and we are looking at starting end of January, beginning of February. I spoke with Randy Lefler, who works with Michigan Works. They just recently received a grant and would like to start working their program that they are running in Michigan Prisons at the county jail levels. He said with this grant they will be able to this. The jail was excited when I let them know about his program and how it could benefit their veteran inmates.

ii. AA

- i. Reginald- We have gotten all the literature that was needed for the meetings and Rachel has sent the informational flyers to our stakeholders and posted it on social media. The meeting dates have been set and we are ready for our first meeting that will be taking place on 12/15/22. We are going to look into seeing if we can maybe get Crystal with acudetox to come in prior to the meeting for acupuncture, then attend the AA meeting.

iii. KCVS PMR

- i. Martha- We are currently working on this right now. Ryan has been working hard getting this ready.
- ii. Jill- What is this?
- iii. Martha- It is a Performance Management Review. It is a narrative to present to the Board of Commissioners about our office. Ryan is currently working on the graphs right now to get them to work in a very difficult program we are using. This is only a 15 mins narrative to present and shows the data we've collected from our department. We can show the presentation at the next meeting if there is interest.

iv. Thanksgivings Day Baskets

- i. Mary- Rachel added something in the packet about the Thanksgivings day basket. She said that she more than enough for the basket and was able to buy a nice laundry basket to put all the goodies in. Post 179 has also asked for names of 6 families in need this Christmas. They currently have 3. So, we are going to support this post or other organization who are looking to support some veteran families this year instead of doing our own thing. Thank you all for you support in helping to making the Thanksgivings basket a success this year.

v. Operation Green Light and Veterans Day Parade

- i. Mary- We believe that these events were a success this year. Although it was a little cool the night of the parade, it was a success. There was a lot of people along the parade route and before just happy, thanking everyone for their service and of course waving their green lights.
- ii. KCVS Manager Martha- We had music in the park afterward and it turned out very nice. We ended up giving out all the green t-shirts we had that night at the parade. It was a great outreach for us, we also had support from the Kent County Sheriff's Department also.
- iii. Mary- A big thank you to KCVS Rachel and Eric Nelson for putting all of that together. We also had a booth set up for the Griffins game for veterans' day, how did that go KCVS Mandi?
- iv. Mandi- It went very well, just on Friday night I made a lot of contact with veterans in our county. I was able to hand out some business cards and also information pertaining to our office. It was a good way to inform the veterans in our area about what we do in our office.
- v. Jill- Do we ever do RV shows?
- vi. KCVS Martha- Not usually, but it something to think about for the future. I have told Rachel we need to take a break on outreach right now, give her a small break to catch her breath. She has been very busy. This is something that we could make a presence to if some of the committee would like to attend and man the booth also. Something to consider.
- vi. Appointment of new KCVS Committee member
 - i. Mary- I haven't received word yet on our new committee member. This meeting will be Trisha's last meeting. We should here any day now who our new member is. Usually December is when we find out.

8) New Business

- i. Election of officers
 - i. Chair- Mary, nominated by Mel and seconded by Reginald
 - ii. Vice Chair- Jill, nominated by herself
 - iii. Secretary- Michael, nominated by himself.
 - iv. Motion to approve these positions- Mel, seconded by Reginald. All approved say "I"- I. These individuals will be the officers for 2023.
- ii. Dates of 2023 Meetings
 - i. Approved by all

iii. Veterans court graduation

- i. Trisha- Next Friday the Veterans Court is having a graduation. I highly recommend everyone to go and watch one. Also, I think it is a good idea to come with anyone who is involved with the Veterans only AA meetings you will be having here.

9) New Activities

- i. Mel- I have a couple. The United Veterans Council Dinner will be the June 24th, 2023. The selection committee has already been appointed. So, we are waiting for the veteran's organizations to send in their nominee's for review. Everything will be the same as last year, including the same caterer. We are just looking for some nominees. Secondly, I spoke with the new commander with the United Veterans Council and they are looking for a adjutant. If there is anyone interested, let me know as I'd be interested in talking with them.
- ii. Mary- Don't they have a new president?
 - i. Mel- Yes, it's me.
- iii. Reggie- This Saturday is the Army vs. Navy football game. We are having a watch party at Heroes Corner; we will have pizza and chicken. Also, December 17 will be the veterans Christmas party. That will be from 4-7pm. If you have any unopened toys at home, we can use those also for the Christmas event.
 - i. Martha- Please send us the information. We will go ahead and post it on our social media for you.

10) Public Comment

- i. Paul Ryan- On February 13th & 14th we will be having a field trip with the Coast Guard. We will be going to witness their Ice breaking in the straits of Mackinaw. You will need to pay to get yourself up there, but it's a nice vessel. It's a 140-foot ice breaking tug named the Brisbane bay. The ship will depart from the Coast Guard station in St. Ignace and will drive underneath the Mackinaw bridge. The overall trip is about 2 hours. I will send out the flyer to KCVS Rachel to forward on your you all (committee members). West Michigan Veterans Collation awarded 16 scholarship this year. We have had several repeat students that have used this scholarship program. We've given out about 70 scholarships since in inception of this program. Our operations manager Deborah Unsell has really helped with the student's applications to make sure they're filled out properly and counseling they beforehand. We are also working on our plans for next year. We are looking to focus on food insecurity. We are looking at working in with health care needs also. I don't have details yet, as we are still planning.

11) Meeting Adjourned at 9:59am.

12) Meeting transcribed by Amanda Lake

