

Innovative Example Descriptions

Serving Our Nation's Service Members, Veterans, Families & Families of the Fallen

Across the nation, many local-level organizations are stepping up to the plate to ensure that our Nation's returning Service Members, Veterans, Families and Families of the Fallen have access to the services and support they need to succeed during transition and reintegration into civilian life. The focus of these efforts is on education, meaningful employment and access to health care within communities.

1. Web Portals – Expanding Collaboration and Information Sharing at the Local Level

There is a need to expand collaboration and information sharing with Web portals through public-private partnerships to reduce costs, competition, and duplication of efforts. For example, the web portals below assist community organizations in helping Veterans, Service Members and families access the wide range of services and resources available to them during transition and community reintegration. Community organizations are encouraged to contribute information and resources to these portals as a way to expand their reach and effectiveness.

Illinois Joining Forces (IJF)

Illinois Joining Forces is a state-wide public and private organizational network that allows for collaboration and marshaling of available resources and services in order to create efficient access and delivery to the State's military and veteran communities. It is a joint Illinois Department of Military Affairs and Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs effort that strives to improve the quality of life for service members, veterans, and their families throughout the state of Illinois. Illinois Joining Forces gives individuals the ability to search by topic, county, and zip code for services such as housing, education, employment and job training, behavioral health, disability benefits, emergency assistance, and legal support.

Website: www.illinoisjoiningforces.org

National Resource Directory (NRD)

The National Resource Directory is a government-sponsored Web portal created to help wounded warriors, Service Members, Veterans and their families and caregivers connect to services and resources that support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration. It provides access to thousands of services and resources at the national, state, and local levels and gives individuals the ability to search by topic, state, and zip code. The NRD was created collaboratively by the U.S. Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Labor. The information it contains comes from federal, state, and local government agencies; Veterans service and benefit organizations; nonprofit and community based organizations; academic institutions; and professional associations that provide assistance to wounded warriors and their families.

Website: www.nrd.gov

2. Community Action Teams – Collaborating to Support Veterans

Augusta, Georgia

The Augusta Warrior Project connects warriors and their families in the Greater Augusta area and South Carolina (CSRA) with resources that provide health and wellness, career building education and meaningful employment. Augusta Warrior Project's model is based on developing a proactive relationship with military families in order to prevent or mitigate life crisis. Collaborative relationships with local, state, and national organizations ensure the support for our warriors and their families.

Website: www.augustawarriorproject.org

Charlotte Bridge Home

Charlotte Bridge Home assists Charlotte veterans' successful transition and reintegration by identifying their education, employment and healthcare needs and connecting them to available community, state and federal resources. Charlotte Bridge Home seeks to fully integrate employment and education to build career opportunities for military families in the Charlotte area.

Website: www.charlottebridgehome.org

Jacksonville, Florida

The Jacksonville Military Veterans Coalition (JMVC) is a public /private partnership, led by Jacksonville Mayor's office. JMVC currently serves veterans and transitioning military families facilitating career, business, housing, and education opportunities in Jacksonville. The JMVC works with military organizations, veterans groups, industry associations, governmental entities, and Jacksonville businesses to leverage the veteran population for economic and leadership development.

Website: www.coj.net/departments/military-affairs,-veterans-and-disabled-services/veterans-service-division/jobs-for-vets/jmvc.aspx

3. Education

Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans (EBV)

The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) offers cutting edge, experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management to post-9/11 veterans with disabilities resulting from their service to our country. The EBV is designed to open the door to business ownership for our veterans by 1) developing your skills in the many steps and activities associated with launching and growing a small business, and by 2) helping you leverage programs and services for veterans and people with disabilities in a way that furthers your entrepreneurial dreams. The EBV is designed around two central elements: a) focused, practical training in the tools and skills of new venture creation and growth, reflecting issues unique to disability and public benefits programs; and b) the establishment of a support structure for graduates of the program. The practical elements of the program will involve three phases: 1) Delegates participate in a self-study curriculum, facilitated by an online discussion and assessment module, which will be moderated by entrepreneurship faculty and graduate students from one of the partner EBV Universities. During this phase delegates will work on the development of their own business concepts. 2) During the nine-day residency at one of the eight EBV Universities, delegates are exposed to the "nuts and bolts" of business ownership through experiential workshops and lessons from world-class entrepreneurship faculty representing nationally ranked programs around the country. 3) Delegates are provided with ongoing technical assistance from faculty experts at the EBV Universities and EBV partners.

Website: <http://whitman.syr.edu/ebv/>

No Greater Sacrifice

No Greater Sacrifice (NGS) was created to raise funds to support the educational needs of children and families. In so doing, they honor the sacrifice and commitment to the men and women in uniform. NGS accomplishes its mission in part by partnering with charities already on the ground to ensure that children of wounded warriors with a disability rating of 60% or greater will be able to attend and successfully graduate.

Website: www.nogreatersacrifice.org/

Student Veterans of America

Student Veterans of America (SVA) provides veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation. SVA member chapters are student groups that have formed on college and university campuses to provide peer-to-peer networks for Veterans attending those schools. These groups coordinate campus activities, provide professional networking, and generally provide a touchstone for Student Veterans in higher education.

Website: www.studentveterans.org

ThanksUSA

ThanksUSA is a non-partisan, charitable effort to mobilize Americans of all ages to "thank" the men and women of the United States armed forces by providing need-based college, technical and vocational school scholarships for their children and spouses. ThanksUSA complements, and in some cases might supplement, a variety of additional scholarship opportunities, including the G.I. Bill (direct educational aid for the troops) and other scholarships for military children and spouses that are offered by other organizations.

Website: www.ThanksUSA.org

*No endorsement of any named organization is implied.

4. Employment

American Corporate Partners (ACP) - Long-Term Career Development through Mentoring

ACP is a nationwide mentoring program dedicated to helping Veterans transition from the armed services to the civilian workforce through mentoring, career counseling, and networking with professionals from some of America's largest corporations and select universities. ACP's recruitment of new mentors and the demonstration of their success not only encourage additional involvement but also significantly increases public awareness. ACP is not a jobs program, but a tool for networking and long-term career development.

Website: www.acp-usa.org

Point of contact: Sid Goodfriend, Founder, sgoodfriend@acp-usa.org

International Brotherhood of Teamsters - Helmets to Hardhats

Making a successful transition from the military into the civilian workforce can be difficult and that is why Helmets to Hardhats (H2H) is dedicated to helping National Guard, Reserve, retired and transitioning active-duty military members connect to quality career and training opportunities in one of America's most challenging and rewarding industries – construction. Although H2H is a Web-based program that requires online registration and provides career postings, its set apart from other initiatives in that it employs several Regional Directors and has many dedicated volunteers who take an active role in connecting Veterans to career and training opportunities. H2H makes the connection between career providers and candidates. Some listings on the H2H Web site are for apprenticeship training opportunities, while others are for careers with public and private employers.

Website: <http://helmetstohardhats.org/>

Point of contact: Elizabeth "Liz" Murray-Belcaster, embconsultants@gmail.com

5. Peer to Peer – Healthy Lifestyle Alternatives - Health Care

Give an Hour

Give an Hour is a nonprofit, founded by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen. The organization's mission is to develop national networks of volunteers capable of responding to both acute and chronic conditions. Give an Hour is dedicated to meeting the mental health needs of the troops and families affected by the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. They provide counseling to individuals, couples and families, and children and adolescents. As of August 2012, their network of licensed mental health professional includes nearly 6,500 psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, marriage and family therapists, drug and alcohol counselors, pastoral counselors, and other professional counselors.

Website: <http://www.giveanhour.org>

Operation TBI Freedom

Operation TBI Freedom is a privately funded program assisting Service members and veterans with service-related traumatic brain injuries (TBI). Each participant is assigned a military support specialist who is both a veteran and Certified Brain Injury Specialist. Operation TBI Freedom analyzes VA benefits, identifies potential benefit enhancements, and assists the veteran in maximizing his or her access to healthcare and other benefits. To date, Operation TBI Freedom has assisted almost 800 veterans.

Website: www.operationtbifreedom.org

Phoenix Multisport

Phoenix Multisport fosters a supportive, physically active community for individuals who are recovering from alcohol and substance abuse and those who choose to live a sober life. Through such pursuits as climbing, hiking, running, swimming, road and mountain biking, and other activities, the organization seeks to help its members develop and maintain the emotional strength they need to stay sober.

Website: <http://www.phoenixmultisport.org/>

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The Mission Continues

The Mission Continues awards community service fellowships to post-9/11 veterans, empowering them to transform their own lives by serving others and directly impacting their communities. Mission Continues Fellows serve for six months at a local nonprofit organization addressing key educational, environmental or social issues. Each Fellow works to achieve one of three outcomes at the conclusion of the fellowship: full-time employment, pursuit of higher education or a permanent role of service. At the culmination of the fellowship, each Fellow will lead a service project in his/her community, bringing veterans and civilians together in days of service nationwide. These projects are bridging the military-civilian divide, allowing veterans to feel more connected to their communities and helping civilians gain a better understanding of and appreciation for our men and women in uniform.

Website: <http://missioncontinues.org>

Vets Prevail - Created For Vets By Vets

The interactive training is delivered online, to reach the modern Veteran, providing a convenient and completely confidential approach to treating deployment-related effects of combat such as PTSD, depression and anxiety. Public Service Announcements created by Vets Prevail have made a dramatic impact on building public awareness of the challenges associated with untreated post traumatic stress in turn having an effect on increasing community involvement.

Website: www.vetsprevail.com

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

TAPS is the 24/7 tragedy assistance resource for ANYONE who has suffered the loss of a military loved one, regardless of the relationship to the deceased or the circumstance of the death. Founded out of tragedy in 1994, TAPS has established itself as the front line resource to the families and loved ones of our military men and women. TAPS provides comfort and care through comprehensive services and programs including peer based emotional support, case work assistance, connections to community-based care, and grief and trauma resources.

Website: <http://www.taps.org/>

Troops First Foundation

Troops First Foundation develops, operates, and supports a synergistic group of wellness, quality-of-life, and sports-based initiatives in support of today's military personnel. In addition, the foundation's initiatives facilitate a greater recognition and an enhanced understanding of the quality and character of the men and women who volunteer to serve their families, their daily sacrifices and the constant need to evaluate and improve their quality of life. Both non-injured and injured military personnel and their families are served at no cost.

Website: <http://www.troopsfirstfoundation.org/>

U.S. VETS

The mission of U.S. VETS is the successful transition of military Veterans and their families through the provision of housing, counseling, career development and comprehensive support. It provides comprehensive services to Veterans, including case management, employment assistance, job placement, counseling, as well as drug and alcohol free housing. Providing these services encourages more community involvement and builds public awareness. At U.S. VETS facilities, Veterans progress through a seamless continuum of services designed to help them increase their level of responsibility and prepare them to live independently in the community.

Website: www.usvetsinc.org/

6. Legal / Law

New Directions – Co-Use of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Owned Land

New Directions, Inc., a nonprofit with years of experience providing comprehensive community services to veterans, is partnering with A Community of Friends (ACOF), a nonprofit with more than two decades of experience in developing permanent supportive housing.

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Their joint plan, called the Housing for Veterans Project, will transform two unused buildings into 147 studio apartments for homeless and disabled Veterans. Buildings 4 and 5 on the Sepulveda grounds, owned by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), will be rehabilitated to accommodate the units, as well as community rooms and dining, recreation and classroom space. The VA owns the property and has granted 75-year leases to New Directions and ACOF for the project.

Website: <http://www.newdirectionsinc.org/>

7. Family Enrichment

Project Sanctuary

Project Sanctuary provides therapeutic, supportive, and recreational activities to Service members, veterans and their families (spouses and children) using a holistic approach to heal all members of the family. Project Sanctuary offers a variety of workshops and recreational opportunities allowing Service members/veterans to reacquaint themselves with their loved ones. Services are provided through six-day retreats at YMCA of the Rockies in Granby, Colorado at no cost to participating families.

Website: <http://projectsanctuary.us/>

Camp Better America

Camp Better America is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to reconnect military families by giving them the tools they need to create, build and achieve their dreams. CBA's program focuses on the entire military family. CBA's vision is to reach every military family that has served since September 11, 2001. Camp Better America's resort-like camps are located all over the country at beautiful privately owned retreats, resorts and ranches, free of charge to military families and usually span over a 4 day period. CBA focuses on the reconnection and reintegration process for military families after the service member in the family returns from war. Some focus points are on life stress, triggers and coping mechanisms of PTSD and offer extended services to the family including a Military Child Life Program.

Website: www.campbetteramerica.org

Family Warrior Weekend

Family Warrior Weekend is a weekend retreat for Service Members and their immediate family members of ALL ages (spouses, children, parents and siblings, or alone) who have been effected as a result of OEF/OIF/OND (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn), from September 11, 2001- present in any way. 2013 family weekends will be held February 15-18, March 8-10, April 19-21, August 16-18, September 20-22 and October 25-27, 2013 at the beautiful Warm Springs' (Warm Springs, Georgia) Camp Dream. Families can participate in recreational activities ranging from sports, aquatics, outdoor activities, games and arts & crafts. Coping/counseling services for families are also provided.

Website: www.camptwinlakes.org/FWW