



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT 2014
"Veterans Helping Veterans"

November, 2014

Via Letter of Transmittal Electronically to:

The Honorable Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
The Honorable Craig Rice, President, Montgomery County Council
Uma S. Ahluwalia, Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

The Commission on Veterans Affairs is pleased to present a summary of its activities for the past year. We continue to advise and consult with you on issues of concern to the estimated 46,000 veterans, and their families, who live in the County. Under your leadership and with your support, the Commission is mandated to research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information that will assist in meeting the needs of veterans and their families. The Commissioners bring knowledge and expertise to the County by providing valuable input and advice on issues affecting our veterans.

We are working to increase access in the County to health care for veterans. The County needs to encourage veterans and their families to enroll them in the VA health care system and we ask that information be provided on County Ride On buses as to how to enroll. The County needs to continue to press to build more collaborative relationships with the VA Medical Center in D.C., with the ultimate goal of establishing a Community Based Outpatient Clinic in the county. In the interim the County should ask the DCVAMC to have increased bus service and shuttles to Montgomery County.

The Commission is working to increase outreach to the general veteran population regarding programs, services and recognition events; and this includes supporting veterans at Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove. We are working to increase VA presence in the county. The Commission achieved a major goal in having a full-time Veterans Service Officer funded by the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs stationed at Montgomery College to help veterans with their benefits. We continue to encourage cooperation, coordination and collaboration among all agencies and non-profits that serve veterans so that everyone works together to provide the best services possible to veterans and their families. We have focused on identifying veterans and their family members, on recognition of active military and veterans and particularly those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our great nation. The new hiring preference for disabled veterans and veterans has led to the hiring of 98 veterans including four disabled veterans. We were pleased to be part of the dedication of Memorial Plaza and that you have designated "2015 as the Year of Montgomery County's Veterans and Their Families."

We wish to recognize and give our personal thanks to all Commissioners, the many community members, and the agency staff who participate in our meetings for their commitment and dedication. We would like to acknowledge DHHS Director Uma Ahluwalia for her role in meeting with the Boards, Commissions and Committees to keep us informed of important health and human services issues, Dr. Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Service, Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, and Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist, for their outstanding support in providing the Commission with the resources needed to carry out our mission. This report is the result of our combined efforts.

It has been a pleasure to work with you and members of the Commission during our term of service. We are confident that you will continue to support the Commission's efforts to enhance the lives of our veterans. Our meetings are open to the public, and we invite you to join us for any meeting.

Sincerely,

Jerry Godwin
Chair



Dan Bullis
Vice-Chair

MEMBERSHIP LIST 2013 - 2014

VETERANS REPRESENTATIVES

Daniel Bullis, Disabled American Veterans
 Bill Gray, Vietnam Veterans of America
 Roland R. Kauffman, Vietnam Veterans of America
 Kris Kumaroo, American Legion/Veterans of Foreign Wars
 Elizabeth (Jane) McCarthy, American Legion
 Sarah Miller, Veteran
 Wayne Miller, Disabled American Veterans
 Randy Stone, American Legion

GENERAL PUBLIC MEMBERS

Sharon Hodge
 Lorrie Knight-Major
 Lisa Stern
 Marie Wood

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Jerry S. Godwin, Dept. of Economic Development
 Michael L. Subin, Office of the County Executive

NON-VOTING CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Ann Humphrey, Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen

STAFF

Betsy Luecking, *Staff Liaison*
 Carly Clem, *Administrative Specialist I*

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SUMMARY OF 2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The accomplishments of the Commission on Veterans Affairs in 2014 were crucial in laying the foundation for 2015, which was designated by County Executive Isiah Leggett and County Council President Craig Rice on November 10, 2014 as “*2015: The Year of Montgomery County’s Veterans and Their Families.*”
- We worked with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs to secure land from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in Seneca Creek State Park in Germantown for a new home for the headquarters of the Warrior Canine Connection (WCC). WCC continues to show great promise in providing an effective, non-pharmaceutical intervention model that helps treat symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.
- We supported the Veterans Collaborative as it held a Veteran Resource and Volunteer Fair in May at Glen Echo Park to educate members of the public about volunteer opportunities to help veterans and their families.
- We continue our efforts to combat veteran homelessness through our support of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. The County has received 80 VASH vouchers over the last four years, each worth \$13,122 or \$1,049,760 per year in housing subsidies.
- We take seriously our duties to publically recognize our veterans. They should be thanked for service to their Nation in uniform and also for continued service as public servants, students, employees, and cherished neighbors. The Commission worked with both the Rockville Public Library and the Silver Spring Civic Building to install flat screen televisions that are dedicated to scrolling the names and pictures of County residents killed in action in combat dating back to World War II. In addition the Silver Spring Display includes information for Veterans and all active military.
- In November the Commission participated in the dedication of Memorial Plaza. The design includes an eternal flame dedicated to the memory of those who have sacrificed their lives in service to our country.
- These accomplishments establish the foundation for 2015, the Year of Montgomery County Veterans and their Families. We will not rest and will continue to find innovative and effective tools to help veterans and their families. We held the November public meeting at Flower Valley Elementary School near Olney for our first-ever satellite meeting. This will allow the Commission to talk to veterans in the neighborhoods in which they live, educating them on the Commission’s efforts while giving veterans and their families an opportunity to educate the Commission on their needs and concerns.
- The Commission has continued to press the Veterans Administration for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Montgomery County. Representatives from the Commission, the County Executive, Congressman Van Hollen and Senator Cardin met regularly with staff from the VA Medical Center for several months on the progress of such a clinic. Led by Congressman Van Hollen, all three members of Congress whose districts include Montgomery County wrote a joint letter to then-Secretary Shinseki expressing their very strong support for the clinic. County Executive Leggett wrote a similar letter. A Montgomery County CBOC is now in the VA budget for VISN-5, our area VA health network, and is currently in review under the Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) process.
- Vice-Chair Dan Bullis and Commissioner Wayne Miller were featured on the County Cable Montgomery talk show *Seniors Today* with host Austin Heyman. You can view the video by visiting:
http://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?clip_id=8226&view_id=10&embed=1&player_width=480&player_height=360&entrytime=1130&stoptime=1794&auto_start=1
Plans are underway for a veterans talk show on County Cable Montgomery.



Dan Bullis, Vice-Chair, Wayne Miller, Commissioner, and Austin Heyman, Host, Seniors Today

COUNTY UNVEILS NEW MEMORIAL PLAZA



Inscription:
The Eternal Flame
Dedicated November 10, 2014
Honors All Active Military and Veterans
Of Montgomery County
To Those Who Died: Honor and Eternal Rest;
To Those Still In Bondage: Remembrance and Hope;
To Those Who Returned: Gratitude and Peace.

COUNTY UNVEILS NEW MEMORIAL PLAZA



Paying tribute Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (left) shakes hands with retired Navy CDR Everett Alvarez Jr. of Rockville, who was the longest-held aviator prisoner of war in Vietnam, after Monday's dedication of Memorial Plaza and unveiling of the Eternal Memorial Flame in Rockville. At right is Montgomery County Council President Craig Rice.

Photo: Dan Gross/The Gazette

In observance of Veterans Day, the new Memorial Plaza located on the Government Complex Center Terrace between the new Courthouse annex and the Executive Office Building in Rockville along Route 28 was officially dedicated and the eternal flame unveiled on November 10.

The ceremony was an opportunity for the County to show its appreciation and support for those people who put their lives on the line, domestically and abroad, to ensure our continued safety.

Among those participating was retired Navy CDR Everett Alvarez Jr. of Rockville, who was the first U.S pilot to be downed and detained during the Vietnam War and spent over eight years in captivity, making him the second longest held American POW, after U.S. Army Colonel Floyd James Thompson.

The plaza is part of the Judicial Center Annex construction project that began in 2011 and involved an addition to, and renovation of, the existing Judicial Center, according to a county news release. The plaza and green spaces were redesigned to invite public use of the space. The area features a water fountain, new trees, benches and a Memorial Walkway to receive the plaques that were relocated from the original Memorial Garden to allow for the construction of the annex.



Retired Navy CDR Everett Alvarez Jr. (right) of Rockville watches as the POW/MIA flag is raised at Monday's dedication of Memorial Plaza and unveiling of the Eternal Memorial Flame in Rockville.

Photo: Dan Gross/The Gazette

COUNTY UNVEILS NEW MEMORIAL PLAZA



Jerry Godwin, Chair, Commission on Veterans Affairs gives remarks at the Memorial Plaza dedication



Retired Navy CDR Everett Alvarez Jr. and Commissioner Michael Subin



County Executive Isiah Leggett and Council President Craig Rice presents Commission on Veterans Affairs Chair Jerry Godwin with a proclamation declaring that 2015 shall be the year of "Montgomery County's Veterans and Their Families". Also pictured are Councilmembers Roger Berliner and Phil Andrews, Gaithersburg Mayor Sidney Katz, and Congressman Chris Van Hollen.



Proclamation

Montgomery County Maryland

WHEREAS, the vigilance and military service of the residents of Montgomery County who served in the Armed Forces has been instrumental to the preservation of the freedom, security, justice and prosperity enjoyed by all in the County; and

WHEREAS, our local active duty military members, retirees, reservists, National Guard and their families are our neighbors, volunteers, coaches, teachers, educators, legislators, colleagues in civic clubs, religious institutions and many more; and

WHEREAS, the families of our 46,000 veterans in Montgomery County are forever diligent in their support, dedication, love and endurance through long separations, multiple tours of duty, and the challenges associated with post-deployment conditions; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County wishes to honor our Veterans and their families. The year 2015 is a fitting time for Montgomery County to celebrate and honor our Veterans and their families;

NOW, THEREFORE, DO WE, Isiah Leggett as County Executive, and Craig Rice as County Council President, declare that 2015 shall be the year of

MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

We encourage all of our residents to join us in honoring our Veterans and their families for their courage and sacrifice.



Signed this 10th day of November in the year 2014 .


County Executive


County Council President

TOP TWO POLICY ISSUES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015 (FY15)

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING WITH THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE, COUNTY COUNCIL
The Commission's Top Two Policy Issues for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15)**

Jerry Godwin, Chair - Dan Bullis, Vice-Chair

October 16, 2014

On behalf of the Commission on Veterans Affairs, we want to thank you for your efforts on behalf of the County's almost 50,000 veterans. Here are the Commission's top policy issues for FY15:

The Council work with us to increase access in the County to health care for veterans. The County needs to encourage veterans and their families to enroll them in the VA health care system and we ask that information be provided on County Ride On buses as to how to enroll. The County needs to continue to press to build more collaborative relationships with the VA Medical Center in D.C., with the ultimate goal of establishing a Community Based Outpatient Clinic in the county. This could include asking the DCVAMC to have a shuttle to Montgomery County.

The Council work with us to increase outreach to the general veteran population regarding programs, services and recognition events; and this includes supporting veterans at Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove. We are working to increase VA presence in the county. The Commission achieved a major goal in having a full-time Veterans Service Officer funded by the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs stationed at Montgomery College to help veterans with their benefits, but the county's relationship with the VA medical system is still very limited. Now the Veterans Service Officer has resigned and they are in the hiring process

We continue to encourage cooperation, coordination and collaboration among all agencies and non-profits that serve veterans so that everyone works together to provide the best services possible to veterans and their families.

We will be asking the County Executive to designate 2015 as "The Year of Montgomery County Veterans and their Families." If there is one thing that military service teaches you, it's the importance of teamwork – standing shoulder to shoulder with the Solider, Marine, Airman, Sailor or Coast Guardsman next to you. Our veterans and their families stood shoulder to shoulder for us; we must now stand shoulder to shoulder for them. They deserve no less.

Thank you.

EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES TO INCREASE HIRING

The Commission on People with Disabilities began advocating for a non-competitive hiring process for people with disabilities, similar to the Federal Government, in the early 90's and in the past eight years formed a strong collaboration for this effort from the Office of Human Resources (OHR), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Commission on Veterans Affairs, County Executive Ike Leggett and the entire County Council. OHR and HHS has worked with Montgomery Works, Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), SEEC (Seeking Equality, Empowerment and Community), Ivymount School and other agencies to implement programs and hiring initiatives that will increase the hiring of these under-employed populations. To promote a more inclusive workforce the County has also implemented Quest, Project Search, Customized Employment Program and legislation in 2009 for a competitive hiring preference for veterans and people with disabilities. The County Executive and County Council enacted Executive Regulation 1-13 which made effective a non-competitive hiring authority for people with severe disabilities in the County government in 2013. This is a non-competitive appointment of qualified persons with disabilities. As a result of these initiatives, since 2012, the County has hired the following into positions as of August 14, 2014:

- Total Hires: 119
- Non Competitive Hires of People with Severe Disabilities: 11
- People with Disabilities: 10
- Vet: 94
- Veterans with Disabilities: 4



A Better Bottom Line - Montgomery County Government video regarding the employment of people with disabilities and veterans. (YouTube):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-2A_PbxrqA (6 minutes 27 second version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWOYNkEWE5s> (11 minute 42 second version)

MIKULSKI, CARDIN ANNOUNCE OVER \$1.3 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR JOB TRAINING VETERANS

Press Release - June 30, 2014

Grants Will Fund Job Skills Training, Career Counseling for Veterans

U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski (both D-Md.) today announced a grant in the amount of \$1,334,427 from the U.S Department of Labor (DOL) to provide job training to homeless veterans in Maryland. The grants are being awarded under the Department’s Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program, administered by the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service.

“Our veterans have sacrificed for this nation and we have a responsibility to provide them with the training and skills they need to transition from the military to civilian world. No veteran who has served this nation honorably should ever want for a roof over his or her head,” said **Senator Cardin**, a member of the Senate Finance Committee. “These federal funds will give veterans the tools they need to find a job and reclaim their lives in communities across Maryland.”

“I believe our support for our military in the field must be matched by support for our veterans at home,” **Senator Mikulski**, Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriation Committee which funds DOL, and a member of the Senate Veterans Jobs Caucus and Senate Military Families Caucus. “Our veterans who have fought on the front lines shouldn’t have to stand in line for a job when they get home. These funds in the federal checkbook are critical to providing on-the-job training, helping homeless veterans get off the street and back on the job.”

The funding was awarded on a competitive basis to state and local workforce investment boards, local public agencies and nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and community organizations. Grantees have proven that they can effectively provide homeless veterans with the requisite skills to find employment. Grantees will also assist veterans with career counseling, life skills, money management, and housing placement. The Maryland funding is part of a larger \$36,710,368 package that will aid 12,000 veterans nationwide. \$9,094,355 will go to new grantees.

| PY14 (OPTION YEAR 1) HVRP GRANTEES | | |
|--|----|-----------|
| Easter Seals Greater Washington-Baltimore Region | MD | \$299,940 |
| Maryland Center for Vets Education & Training Inc. | MD | \$300,000 |
| | | |
| PY14 (OPTION YEAR 2) HVRP GRANTEES | | |
| Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation | MD | \$134,487 |
| Way Station Inc. | MD | \$300,000 |
| | | |
| PY14 HOMELESS FEMALE VETERANS AND VETERANS W/ FAMILIES GRANTEES | | |
| Easter Seals Greater Washington-Baltimore Region | MD | \$300,000 |

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC (CBOC) UPDATE



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

February 24, 2014

Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

I am writing to inform you of my strong support for the position taken by Congressmen Chris Van Hollen, John Delaney, and Jon Sarbanes regarding what appears to be another delay in the earlier decision to open a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Montgomery County, Maryland in 2015. Dr. Brian Hawkins (the VA's Director of the Washington, DC VA Medical Center) conveyed his intention to open the CBOC to my Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA), including representatives of Congressman Chris Van Hollen and Senator Ben Cardin, almost a year ago. A CBOC for Montgomery County was initially authorized in 2008 and scheduled to begin serving Montgomery County's almost 44,600 veterans and others in the Washington, DC metropolitan area sometime in 2010. That did not happen.

Since June 2013, Senator Cardin and Congressman Van Hollen's representatives, the Chair of the CVA, the staff liaison to the CVA, and a member of my staff have been working with Dr. Hawkins' representatives to begin planning for the opening of the CBOC in FY15. However, those meetings were informational only with the staff informing the group where they were in the process. Meetings were held in June and October 2013, and February 2014 (rescheduled from January 2014 because of weather). At the June 2013 meeting, the group was informed that an RFP for space was to be issued within the next thirty days. In fact, the group was informed that the planning had gone as far as designating the general area for the CBOC to be located at south of Shady Grove Road in Gaithersburg, east of I-270, and north of I-495. Optimally, the space would be sized at an estimated 5,000 square feet. At the October 2013 meeting, VA representatives stated that while the RFP had not yet been issued, the plans remained unchanged.

To my dismay, we were advised that the CBOC planned for Montgomery County will be reviewed in light of all other needs and budget constraints, by the VISN's Strategic Capital Investment Plan (SCIP). That review is to apply to previously authorized and scheduled CBOCs. It is difficult for me to imagine how either needs or budget constraints had changed to the point of having to trigger the review. Few anticipated any relief from budget constraints in the near future. Those constraints, including sequestration, were known in June and October 2013; those budget issues must have been known in June 2013 when we were informed that the CBOC was imminent. The fact that the RFP had not yet been issued by October 2013 is evidence that further delays were under consideration. Your staff could have, and should have informed us at that time. While I certainly understand cost-effective strategic planning, I am frustrated by the continued lack of a CBOC here to serve those veterans in need of physical and mental health care, all services which a CBOC would provide.

Although not all veterans enrolled in VA health care actually use it, I believe that much of that lack of use is the result of limited access to care. When one looks at the poverty rates in certain parts of the County where veterans live, one can see that many would avail themselves of VA's health care if services were more readily accessible. I am disheartened by the fact that Montgomery County's veterans will not have that access as we expected. That said, please be assured that we are quite determined to work with your staff to realize a CBOC which will serve our cadre of 44,600 veterans.

I urge you to reconsider any further delay in the establishment of a CBOC in Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Isiah Leggett".

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

cc: Senator Benjamin Cardin
Congressman Chris Van Hollen
Congressman Jon Sarbanes

VA SILVER SPRING VET CENTER GRAND OPENING



Silver Spring Vet Center Ribbon Cutting - Pictured Left to Right: Silver Spring Vet Center Team Leader Wayne Miller, Silver Spring Vet Center Staff Tai Harmon, Commissioner Jane McCarthy, Councilmember Cheri Branson, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Ed Chow, County Executive Isiah Leggett, Member of the Public, Commissioner Mike Subin, and Tommy Stewart, Acting Chief of Readjustment Counseling Services, Vet Center Program.

The Silver Spring Vet Center celebrated its Grand Opening on June 27, 2014 with a festive program that honored veterans from all branches of service. Operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Vet Centers provide free readjustment counseling to combat veterans and their families to help with the transition from military to civilian life. Counseling can help with issues such as employment assessment, PTSD, sexual trauma, substance abuse, and screening and referral for medical issues such as traumatic brain injuries and depression. The Silver Spring Vet Center is located at 2900 Linden Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 301-589-1073 (V). Open Monday and Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.



Silver Spring Vet Center Counseling Office

VA SILVER SPRING VET CENTER SERVICES



Silver Spring Vet Center Staff, Left to Right: Ed Benedict, Michael Gatson, Tai Harmon, Tamia Barnes, Wayne Miller, Courtnee Hawkins

Readjustment Counseling Services

After war, some veterans experience psychological and social distress and difficulties in readjusting to civilian life. In 1979, the Department of Veterans Affairs established Vet Centers to assist Vietnam-era veterans with such problems. Congress later expanded Vet Center services to include combat veterans of other conflicts. These services are available at Vet Centers in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and Guam.

Services Available

- Individual counseling
- Marital and family counseling
- VA benefits assistance and referral
- Substance abuse counseling and referrals
- Primary health care for basic medical needs
- Pre-employment assistance and employment counseling
- Discharge upgrade information
- Community, social service and medical referrals
- Sexual trauma / harassment counseling (veterans of all eras)

The Vet Center also has a network of federal, state, city and community resources to help you. We will try to address any concerns or problems you bring to us.

At the Vet Center, you can expect help from professional counselors who will treat you with respect and understanding. Many of the counselors are also war veterans, so they understand your problems first hand, and have the training and skills to help solve them.

There is no charge for the assistance you receive at the Vet Center because of your sacrifices and efforts for this country. Veterans applying for assistance are asked to bring a copy of their Military Separation or Military Discharge (DD214) with them.

Vet Center Combat Call Center
1-877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)

National Suicide Hot Line
1-800-273-8255 (Toll Free)

**Bereavement Counseling for
Surviving Family Members**
202-461-6530 (V)

Location and Hours of Operation

2900 Linden Lane, Suite 100
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-589-1073 (V)

Monday: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Thursday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Eligibility

War Zone Veterans - All Eras Including:

WWII

Three eligible categories
European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal
(7 Dec 1941 to 8 Nov 1945)
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
(7 Dec 1941 to 2 Mar 1946)
American Campaign Medal
(7 Dec 1941 to 2 Mar 1946)

American Merchant Marines in Oceangoing Service

7 Dec 1941 to 15 August 1945

Korea

27 June 1950 to 27 July 1954
(eligible for the Korean Service Medal)

Vietnam

28 Feb 1961 to 1 May 1975

Lebanon

25 Aug 1982 to 26 Feb 1984

Grenada

23 Oct 1983 to 21 Nov 1983

Panama

20 Dec 1989 to 31 Jan 1990

Persian Gulf

2 Aug 1990 to -

Somalia

17 Sept 1992 to -

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Albania (former Yugoslavia operations)

Global War on Terrorism/OIF/OEF

11 Sept 2001 -

VETERAN DOG TRAINING THERAPY ORGANIZATION TO EXPAND INTO SENECA CREEK STATE PARK

Gazette - June 16, 2014 - By Sarah Scully, Staff Writer

Cpl. Justin Bunce doesn't like doing his physical therapy exercises for his arm. In fact, he sometimes refuses. But hand him a brush and tell him Breeze, a yellow lab, needs to be groomed, and he's happy to help out.

Brushing uses the same motion as the exercises that are supposed to help him regain mobility in his left side after being injured in service by an improvised explosive device while deployed as a Marine in Iraq.

Breeze spends most of her time at the NeuroRestorative house in Germantown where Bunce lives, spending time with him and the five other military service members living there on their way to recovery from brain injuries. She is being trained as a service dog and once she graduates from training, Warrior Canine Connection will pair her with a veteran.

Warrior Canine Connection uses dogs for therapy and teaches service members to train service dogs that will assist veterans. The organization recently came to an agreement with the state to use part of Seneca Creek State Park in Germantown to expand its program.

NeuroRestorative is a nationwide rehabilitation company for people recovering from brain injuries. The company's Germantown residence hosts military service members as a midway point between the hospital and moving home. Since the company began working with Warrior Canine Connection in the summer of 2012, "we noticed immediately" the changes in the veterans interacting with dogs, said lead Life Skills Trainer Katie Gorman.

"There's just a certain therapy that dogs can provide that people can't," Gorman said.

Founded three years ago by Rick Yount, Warrior Canine Connection works with veterans at facilities including Walter Reed in Bethesda, Fort Belvoir in Virginia, and several in California.

On Thursday visitors from NeuroRestorative spent time with the dogs at Warrior Canine Connection's Brookeville headquarters. While none are trainers yet, Army Sgt. Edward Wade, who returned from Iraq in 2004 after being injured by an IED, said he would like to become one.

One of the puppies, Lily, sat on Army 1st. Lt. Jonathon Kohl's lap. Lily takes the Metro every day so she can learn to assist a veteran with the commuting process, though the program hasn't paired her with anyone yet. Jonathon's wife, Aileen Kohl, sat next to him, reminding him of things when his memory failed him and translating his whispered mumbles when needed. Following a helicopter crash in Afghanistan in March 2013, Jonathon was in a coma for 140 days, she said. On Thursday he sat in a wheelchair petting Lily and talking to his wife and puppy program manager Cheryl Tipton. Aileen said Jonathon has relearned how to talk, eat and move in the last several months. He's working on being able to walk again and his memory is coming back slowly. But he has a good sense of humor about it, laughing when he confuses cats with dogs or asks the same questions repeatedly. With the new land at Seneca Creek Park, Warrior Canine Connection will be able to expand its programs and veterans will have a larger space where they can come for therapy, to train dogs, or just relax in a quiet place outdoors.



Cheryl Tipton (right) of the Warrior Canine Connection, an organization that trains service dogs for wounded veterans, introduces a puppy named Lily to Jonathon Kohl (left) as Kohl's wife, Aileen Kohl, looks on at the headquarters of the WCC in Brookeville on June 12. Kohl sustained brain and spinal cord injuries in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan in 2013 while serving in the Army, and he was looking to adopt a service dog.

Photo: Greg Dohler/The Gazette

VETERAN DOG TRAINING THERAPY ORGANIZATION TO EXPAND INTO SENECA CREEK STATE PARK CONTINUED

The 25-year lease agreement allows the organization to use the Schaeffer Farm Area of the park, where it will build new facilities for apprentice service dog training, art and music therapy, acupuncture, equine therapy, and farming and gardening. According to Maryland Park Service Superintendent Nita Settina, in exchange for over \$700,000 in investments Warrior Canine Connection plans to put into the site, the first 10 years of rent will be forgiven. After 10 years, the organization will pay \$1,500 per month, with a rent increase of \$500 every five years.

Gorman said she has a hard time putting into words the impact Warrior Canine Connection has had on the veterans she works with. Having the dogs around the NeuroRestorative house, the patients start getting more sleep, have fewer outbursts and their outlooks become more positive. She remembers one veteran who no one could get through to until a dog did. He was “in a dark, dark place,” she said.

With one of the dogs, “you could see from afar him smiling, him laughing, and that’s all he wanted was someone to hang out with, someone to listen,” she said.

Training dogs is a healing process for many service members, and a way for them to help other veterans.

“They have to be coached to teach the dogs that the world is a safe place,” Yount explained. “They have to convince themselves the same.” It also allows the veterans to focus on the dogs instead of themselves in interactions.

One woman who lived at the NeuroRestorative house had such severe post-traumatic stress disorder that leaving the house was unthinkable. But when Gorman asked her to take a dog to the store as training, she didn’t think twice about it. With the focus on the dog, she hardly realized what she had accomplished until after she returned.

“Training them to be out in public is at the same time training for us,” Marine Sgt. Jon Gordon said. “Teaching the dog that a car backfire is OK, that people on the subway are OK.”

Gordon, 28, trained dogs through the program, including Birdie, the black lab that now lives with him. Before he connected with Birdie, Gordon got a few hours of sleep a night at best and didn’t want to interact with anyone.

“Being able to interact with people in general, I couldn’t do that before,” he said. “I pretty much isolated myself.”

Now Gordon lives in Michigan and hopes to extend canine therapy to other veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs. He has taught several classes sharing his work and experience.

“It was a complete 180. I went from being just quiet, didn’t want to be with anybody, didn’t want to talk with anybody to, ‘I actually have purpose again,’” he said.



FY15 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
Testimony on the FY15 Operating Budget before the County Council
April 9, 2014
Jerry Godwin, Chair
Dan Bullis, Vice Chair

Good evening, my name is Jerry Godwin and I am speaking on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs.

Since the Commission was established, we have been working to ensure that the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides needed services and supports to our estimated 50,000 veterans living in our County. This past year, we are pleased to inform you that the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs hired a full-time Veterans Benefits Officer (VBO) for the County. This person is now working at the Montgomery College Rockville Campus. We are also working to establish a VBO presence at the Universities of Shady Grove. He will also be spending two days a month at MontgomeryWorks in Wheaton and two days a month at the Silver Spring Vet Center.

We do ask that you support the County Executives recommended funding for the following community grants which will better support programs serving veterans:

1. Warrior Canine Connection - \$40,000
2. Mental Health Association of Montgomery County, MD, Inc. - \$75,000 – Community-based model to coordinate resources and increase awareness for military, veterans and their families.
3. Team River Runner, Inc. - \$33,500 – Van purchase to support therapeutic paddling for wounded veterans.

We will work with the County to increase its outreach to veterans regarding programs and services that they are eligible for. To achieve this we ask for your support in having the County identify the veterans that apply for services in the County. We are hopeful to educate the public on veteran resources such as a cable TV show, ride on bus posters and radio station spots. Our county's veterans are local citizens as well, and can/should be using the services afforded to *all* residents.

One of the Commission's duties is to assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions of veterans. We are in the planning stages of having 2015 be designated the Year of the Veteran and Family in the County. This campaign will require much planning, community/business outreach in informing the community and identifying sponsors and partners as we honor our own.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you tonight. We are working to make our community an even better veteran friendly community.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF VETERANS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

The U.S. Census Bureau, 2013, estimates that there are approximately **46,533 veterans living in Montgomery County, Maryland**. According to a 2013 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, 8.1% of Americans self-reported as being a veteran. The Census Bureau defines as veteran as men and women who have served (even for a short time), but are not currently serving, on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or the Coast Guard, or who served in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II. People who served in the National Guard or Reserves are classified as veterans only if they were ever called or ordered to active duty, not counting the 4 to 6 months for initial training or yearly summer camps. All other civilians are classified as nonveterans.

| Veteran Population of Montgomery County, MD - 2013 | | |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| Subject | Veterans | Total |
| Civilian Population 18 years and over | 46,533 (6.0%) | 773,993 |
| Period of Service | Veterans | % of 46,533 |
| Gulf War II (9/2001 or later) veterans | 10,702 | 23.0% |
| Gulf War I (8/1990 to 8/2001) veterans | 9,213 | 19.8% |
| Vietnam era veterans | 13,448 | 28.9% |
| Korean War veterans | 4,374 | 9.4% |
| World War II veterans | 4,420 | 9.5% |
| Gender | Veterans | % of 46,533 |
| Male | 40,391 | 86.8% |
| Female | 6,142 | 13.2% |
| Age | Veterans | % of 46,533 |
| 18 to 34 years | 6,793 | 14.6% |
| 35 to 64 years | 10,749 | 23.1% |
| 64 years and over | 8,189 | 17.6% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013

Montgomery County, MD Veteran Demographics - By City (2008 - 2012)

United States Census QuickFacts only includes data for incorporated places with a population of 5,000 or greater.

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Ashton-Sandy Spring | 390 |
| Aspen Hill | 2,364 |
| Bethesda | 3,494 |
| Burtonsville | 336 |
| Chevy Chase | 650 |
| Clarksburg | 505 |
| Damascus | 917 |
| Darnestown | 376 |
| Four Corners | 487 |
| Gaithersburg | 2,737 |

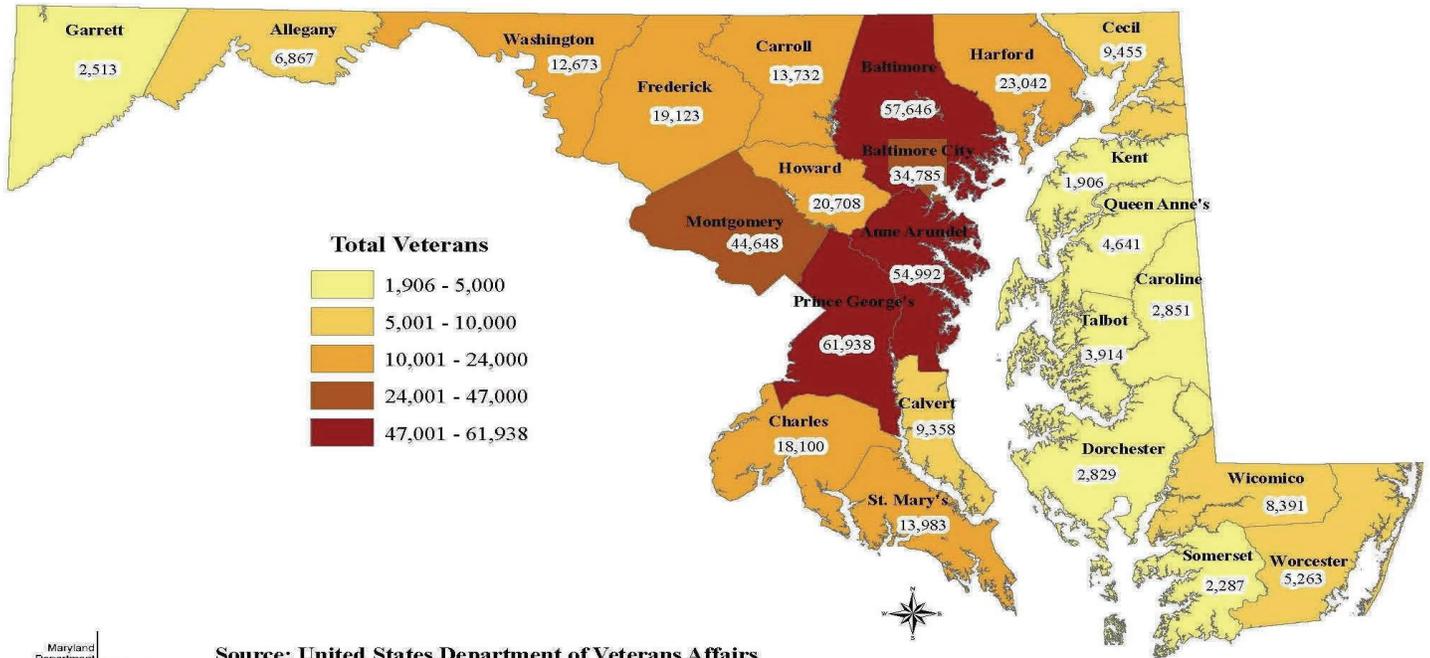
| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Germantown | 3,056 |
| Glenmont | 594 |
| Kemp Mill | 764 |
| Poolesville | 285 |
| Layhill | 337 |
| Leisure World | 1,586 |
| Montgomery Village | 1,477 |
| North Bethesda | 2,289 |
| North Kensington | 643 |
| North Potomac | 929 |

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| Olney | 1,170 |
| Poolesville | 285 |
| Potomac | 2,692 |
| Rockville | 3,169 |
| Silver Spring | 2,964 |
| South Kensington | 479 |
| Takoma Park | 550 |
| Travilah | 680 |
| Wheaton | 2,162 |

Source: U.S. Census QuickFacts 2008 - 2012

PROJECTED NUMBERS OF VETERANS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

Projected Veterans in Maryland: 435,657



Source: United States Department of Veterans Affairs
 Map prepared for the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
 by the Maryland Department of Planning

MONTGOMERY COUNTY VETERANS ENROLLED IN THE VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Montgomery County, MD - Veterans Enrolled in the VA Health Care System By Zip Code

| | Silver Spring / Wheaton / Kensington / Aspen Hill / Colesville | Germantown | Rockville | Potomac | Gaithersburg / Montgomery Village |
|--|--|--------------|--|---------|--|
| Zip codes covered | 20901, 20902, 20903, 20904, 20905, 20906, 20907, 20908, 20910, 20914, 20915, 20916, 20918, 20895, 20993, 20997 | 20874, 20876 | 20847, 20848, 20849, 20850, 20851, 20852, 20853, 20857 | 20854 | 20877, 20878, 20879, 20882, 20883, 20884, 20885, 20886, 20898, 20899 |
| Veteran population (number) | 8,869 | 3,188 | 3,000 | 2,734 | 4,317 |
| Veterans percentage of population | 4.3% | 3.69% | 4.8% | 6.1% | 4.6% |
| Elderly (65 years old+) percentage of total population | 13% | 5.1% | 14.0% | 19.2% | 9.3% |
| Percentage of population below poverty line | 7% | 6.3% | 4.7% | 2.7% | 6.95% |

Source: US Census Bureau, 2013

KEY CONTACTS FOR THE VA AND OTHER RESOURCES



Serving Together is the County's place to find all programs and services for veterans. They are working to connect the Montgomery County community with veteran events and we ask that you help them to advertise in the libraries their website and information. You can check out the calendar and more at www.ServingTogetherProject.org. You can always send calendar events to their Project Coordinator, Rob Welty, at rwelty@mhmc.org. Serving Together also has a weekly newsletter that goes out every Friday morning that includes all the posts they have shared throughout the week. Interested parties can sign up very simply online (at the top of the page).

Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA)

Phil Munley, Director of Program Services
E-mail: pmunley@mdva.state.md.us

410-230-4444 x 6457 (V)

The MDVA Service and Benefits Program provides assistance to the men and women who served in the Uniformed Services of the United States, their dependents, and survivors in obtaining benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, State of Maryland and other programs for veterans and their families. The MDVA is currently working to hire a full-time Veterans Benefits Specialist (VBS) for Montgomery County. This person will work out of Montgomery College in Rockville.

Silver Spring Vet Center

Wayne Miller, Team Leader/Director
2900 Linden Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910
E-mail: wayne.miller3@va.gov

301-589-1073 (V)

202-273-9116 (Bereavement Counseling)

Open Monday and Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Walk-ins are permitted during these hours, but appointments are requested. After hours appointments as needed. Veterans must show proof of service. The center provides benefits counseling and assistance with navigating the VA and paperwork, as well as employment counseling, counseling on PTSD and sub-PTSD, substance abuse counseling, family and marital counseling, psychological counseling related to readjustment, coordination and referral with doctors, employment related issues, assistance with basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, medical and legal referrals, homeless assistance and will work with Montgomery County to find shelter placement, sexual trauma counseling, community outreach, bereavement counseling, and more. All services are provided at no cost to the veteran and their family. **Directions:** The Silver Spring Vet Center is located near the intersection of Seminary Road/Capitol View Avenue. You can also take the #5 Ride On Bus from either the Silver Spring Metro Station or the Twinbrook Metro Station and be dropped off at the Capitol View Avenue stop.

Outreach at Piccard - Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center

1301 Piccard Drive, Room 1005, Rockville, MD 20850

The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) is providing outreach services to veterans at the County's Crisis Center. VAMC Homeless Outreach Staff and Veteran's Justice Outreach Staff are available for both drop in and scheduled visits. The VA will be available to assist veterans by making referrals and connecting veterans who are eligible for VA services with the VA healthcare system. Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV) is also providing staff to be on-site to assist veterans and their families with coordinating behavioral health services, including mental health and substance abuse services - either with the VA or Maryland's Public Health System; facilitate transportation to behavioral health appointments; provide information and referrals related to employment, education, housing or VA benefits; and provide outreach to educate residents, veterans and community groups about MCV.

- Chris Stadter, Homeless Veterans Outreach
E-mail: christopher.stadter@va.gov
Office Hours: Monday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- Ken Barnum, Homeless Veterans Outreach
E-mail: kenneth.barnum@va.gov
Office Hours: Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Karen Carrington, Veterans Justice Outreach
E-mail: karen.carrington2@va.gov
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Melissa Barber, Regional Coordinator
E-mail: mbarber.mcv@gmail.com, 410-725-9971 (V)
Office Hours: Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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COMMISSION PRESENTATIONS FOR 2013 - 2014

November, 2013: Veterans and the County’s Correctional System - *Art Wallenstein, Director, Montgomery County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation*

December, 2013: VA Veteran Employment Programs - *Jason Reatherford, Employment Coordinator, VA Office of Economic Opportunity, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services*

February, 2014: Warrior Canine Connection: Serving the Warrior and Veteran Population in Montgomery County - *Rick Yount, Executive Director*

March, 2014: The Council Council and Key Issues Impacting Veterans - *The Honorable Craig Rice, President, Montgomery County Council*

April, 2014: Serving Veterans - *The Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council - Denise Thomas, Executive Director, and Juanita Bailey, U.S. Army (RET)*

What Went Into the Planning for the World War II Recognition at Silver Spring Veterans Plaza - *Neil H. Greenberger, Legislative Information Officer, Montgomery County Council*

May, 2014: Rebuilding Together and its Role in Assisting Veterans in Renovation in Montgomery County - *Lee Berkeley-Shaw, Director of Fundraising, Rebuilding Together*

Ideas for How the Veterans Administration Medical Center Could Be Doing More In The County - *Ann Humphrey, Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen*

June, 2014: Progress on Ending Veteran Homelessness - *John Mendez, Director Outreach and Special Projects, Bethesda Cares*

Sept, 2014: Easter Seals Military Veterans Programs - *Bob Simpson, Vice-President, Military and Veterans Operations, Easter Seals-Greater Washington Baltimore Region*

Oct, 2014: Overview of Refocusing of Department of Labor and Licensing Regulation Vision - *Bob Pelletier, Veterans Services, MontgomeryWorks*

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS



**County Executive
Isiah Leggett**

The **County Executive** can be reached at:

Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850
240-777-0311 (V)
240-773-3556 (TTY)
ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov



Montgomery County Council

The **County Council** can be reached at:

Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850
240-777-7900 (V)
240-777-7914 (TTY)
240-777-7888 (FAX)
county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov

Seated, left to right: Cherri Branson, Council President Craig Rice, Council Vice President George Leventhal and Nancy Navarro. Standing: Hans Riemer, Phil Andrews, Nancy Floreen, Roger Berliner and Marc Elrich.

**Isiah Leggett, County Executive
Uma S. Ahluwalia, Director
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
401 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
240-777-1246 (V) or via MD Relay 711**

**Language translation and alternative formats of this report are available upon request.
For additional information on the Commission, please call the telephone numbers or write to the
address listed above or e-mail via the contact information listed below.**

*Montgomery County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in
employment or in the admission or access to its programs or services.*

2013 - 2014 Annual Report Prepared By:

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