

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes  
Virtual Meeting  
Monday, August 01, 2022

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Laura Rios at 9:04 A.M.

**II. ATTENDEES:**

Laura Rios	Chris Reilly	Gabriella Barthlow
Katie Page	Pazz Colston	Keri Sutton
Katie Carroll	Lisa Marie Duncan-Edwards	Teena Sawicki
Gary Purcell	Elizabeth Sergent	David Hannum
Kathy Koths	Mark Kilgore	

**III. INTRODUCTIONS/APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Laura asked all attendees to enter their name in the chat box.**

The June 06, 2022 meeting minutes were approved and recorded as written.

**IV. SPECIAL SPEAKERS:**

Katie Page – Vet Center

The Vet Center was created in 1979 when Vietnam Veterans lobbied Congress for a place where combat Veterans could meet together as peer counselors. In 1980, when the diagnosis of PTSD was established, the center started seeing more Mental Health issues among the Veterans that were coming into the center. They started hiring more professional staff to assist the Veterans who were facing these issues. These staff members were Veterans so they could stay true to their model of a peer counseling center. Vet Center services are always free. The Vet Center serves combat Veterans and their families; any Veteran who is a victim of Military Sexual Trauma; and offer bereavement counseling to loved ones who have lost someone in active duty. There are other areas of support as well as eligibility requirements, please contact the Vet Center directly for all services and to see if a Veteran is eligible. The Vet Center has a “no wrong door” policy that seeks out assistance for any Veteran even if their Center is unable to provide that service for them.

Keri Sutton – Mental Health Navigator

The Mental Health Navigator is funded by a grant from Macomb County Community Mental Health. They work with the Veteran and family members. The term Veteran for their program means any person who was in the service no matter the length of time and the condition of their discharge. They will be starting a Wellness Recovery Action Plan/program (WRAP) every other Thursday night from 7 – 9 at CARE. This program is for Veterans, those on active duty, and their families. They have a coffee hour every Friday at the VVA Chapter 154 from 9:00 – 10:00; all Veterans and their family members are invited. . They also have a “no wrong door” policy that will contact Veterans with any kind of service he/she may need. Please contact her for more information on this and other programs.

Mark Kilgore – Veteran Recovery services

They have started a Peer Support Program that is Peer run and Peer led by Veterans only. Right now the most continuous Veterans in this program is from Washington DC by Zoom. They want to find ways to engage Macomb County Veterans in this program. All programs are free and they have many to choose from, please contact Mark for more information.

V. **AGENCY UPDATES/ROUND ROBIN:**

Laura Rios stated the Selfridge Air Show was very well attended, over 70K people attended over the weekend. She stated all vendors attending were overwhelmed with people. She asked each person to give suggestions on how to reach our Veterans.

Chris Reilly stated since Covid, he has seen a lack of people attending outreach events. He believes virtual events seem to be attended more often than in-person events right now. He has also tried attending events (not necessarily Veteran based) that were already scheduled and doing a “pop in.” He has found that sometimes this way has been productive. A lot of the funding for their programs have decreased due to the fact that the “numbers” state unemployment is down. They are also working on a few expungement, clean slate programs. Their center traffic has been very low. The Veteran Employability Camp is still on hiatus for now. He hopes to have them back up soon. Please contact Chris for additional information. Chris mentioned the MVAC flow charts needed to be updated. Laura stated she was working on them. She hopes to put together some “mini committees” to help get these updated.

Gary Purcell mentioned the POW/MIA Recognition Day that is coming up on September 16, 2022 at Resurrection Cemetery. The guest speaker will be a Medal of Honor recipient. The VVA center is open from 9:00 – 2:00 Monday through Friday. Gary stated there is an increase of younger Veterans coming into the center to use the Food Bank. Gary suggested to have more events or outreaches in the evenings when Veterans were not working.

Gabriella Barthlow mentioned to have outreaches or events on weekends or the evenings.

Katie Page mentioned there are several locations of the Vet Center. She works out of the Macomb Vet Center but sees Veterans in different counties. She mentioned people do not want to listen about services that do not apply to them or that they do not need. So, if an event is virtual, have different times listed for different services or benefits available so people can only tune in to the information they feel is relevant to their situation. She also mentioned having outreaches at the schools like during Parent/Teacher conferences or school events. There are a lot of Veteran parents and they would be attending those events at the school. So meet with them where they are going to be anyway.

Keri stated there is a Veteran Navigator in every county or region in the state. If the Veteran is not from the area, they typically serve, they will connect them to the Veteran Navigator who serves their area.

Mark Kilgore invited the collaborative members to come down to the recovery community center to get a tour.

Paz Colston stated they recently acquired a 4 unit apartment which will be used solely for HUDVASH recipients. She hopes this apartment unit (transitional home) will be up and running no later than the end of October. They work personally with each Veteran to get them connected to whatever they need to be able to be self-sufficient.

Teena Sawicki stated she is looking forward to presenting the Suicide Training to the collaborative in October. She states they are gearing up for Suicide Prevention month in September which will include Facebook live events.

**VI. VCAT UPDATE/MVAA UPDATES:**

Next VCAT meeting 9/23/2022 - Suicide Training

**VII. NEXT MEETING:**

October 3rd meeting Teena Sawicki will give a one-hour VA SAVE training.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 A.M.