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News

2010 News

June 15, 2010

Building a Network of Service for Our Military MCN BC Hosts First Service Provider Conference

DOYLESTOWN, PA, June 15, 2010 – Over 50 diverse organizations from a variety of disciplines all gathered this morning to discuss an important shared interest – how best to offer help to our military community.

The assemblage consisted of 65 mental health professionals, law enforcement officials, employment and training specialists, educators, elected official representatives, and veterans' service organizations from local, state and federal levels, all of whom were encouraged to share their perspectives at the interactive session.



The conference stemmed from the seed of an idea brought to the Bucks County Commissioners by Janet Manion, who in 2007 lost her son, USMC 1st Lt Travis Manion, who was killed in action in Iraq. A partnership between the Travis Manion Foundation and the commissioners, which came to be known as the Military Community Network of Bucks County was introduced on Veterans Day 2009.

"One of our main goals is to facilitate the building of relationships among all those who serve our military in some way," noted Mrs. Manion. She encouraged attendees to view the MCN BC as more than a website. "The website is a very useful tool, but the critical part of the network is the ability for us to bring everyone under one roof, so that we begin to approach issues in an interdisciplinary fashion."

County officials in attendance included Commissioner Chairman Charles H. Martin, Chief Operating Officer Brian Hessenthaler, Chief Clerk Lynn Bush, and Veterans Affairs Director Dan Fraley.

Four panelists led the conversation, which centered on employment and transition, education and training, family and survivor support, and health-related issues. In addition to Mrs. Manion, they were:

Adrien F. C. Starks, *Senior Assistant for Public Affairs Policy*, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs/Community Relations

Matthew Fisher, *Post Commander, Doylestown VFW Post 175*, Operation Iraqi Freedom

Roger Collins, *Executive Director, Bucks County Opportunity Council*

Attendees spanned from organizations such as Bucks County Area Agency on Aging, Community & Business Development and the District Attorney's office, Crisis Intervention (CIT) Task Force, Bucks County Community College, Department of PA Jewish War Veterans, Lenape Valley Foundation, National Alliance of Mental Health Bucks County Chapter, Operation Homefront, PA Career Link, PA Veterans Museum, US Department of Veterans Affairs, and Veterans

Upward Bound, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

Now that a large number of partners have been introduced to the network and to each other, the next step in the initiative will take place in November, when the MCN BC will host an expo on Veterans Day. Current and former service members, their families and survivors will be invited to learn about the MCN BC and all the information, resources and services available to them.

According to Mrs. Manion, future plans include sharing this collaborative model with surrounding counties and regions. Meetings with Philadelphia, Delaware, and Montgomery counties have already taken place.

The event was held at and sponsored in part by Delaware Valley College. For more information, visit www.MilitaryCommunityNetwork.org.

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