

WELCOME

February 1, 2023

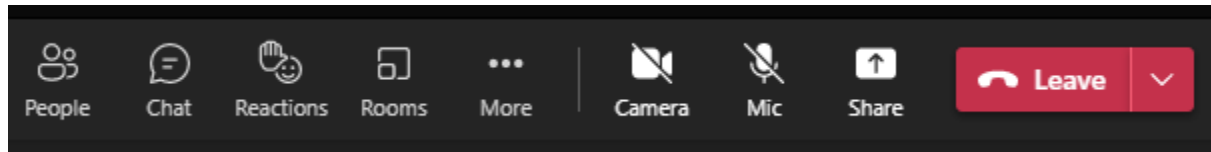
Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

NCTC Classroom

Bldg. 8-63, Fort Indiantown Gap

Annville, PA 17003

Chat function is used to submit comments or questions



*Please enter your **full name and agency** for attendance purposes



INTRODUCTIONS

OLD BUSINESS

YEAR IN REVIEW



- 18 Commonwealth Agencies
- 34+ partners represented through 7 committees (57 meetings in 2022)
- 3 guest speaking opportunities
- Recognized about 1,100 employees through the State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign
- Increased entities on the annual Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign
- 5-6 counties offer the Veterans Trust Fund as a charity where jurors can donate their earnings. 2022: \$38,000
- Women Veterans Tile on the DMVA website

GUEST SPEAKERS

- **PA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS**
- **MEDIA IN NEIGHBORHOODS GROUP**

Building stronger communities
takes creativity

Pennsylvania Council on the Arts – Who we are and what we do

PCA Goals

- Strengthen PA Communities through the Arts
- Connect and increase access to lifelong learning through the arts
- Champion public awareness and appreciation of the arts in PA communities



Supporting our PA Veterans Through the Arts

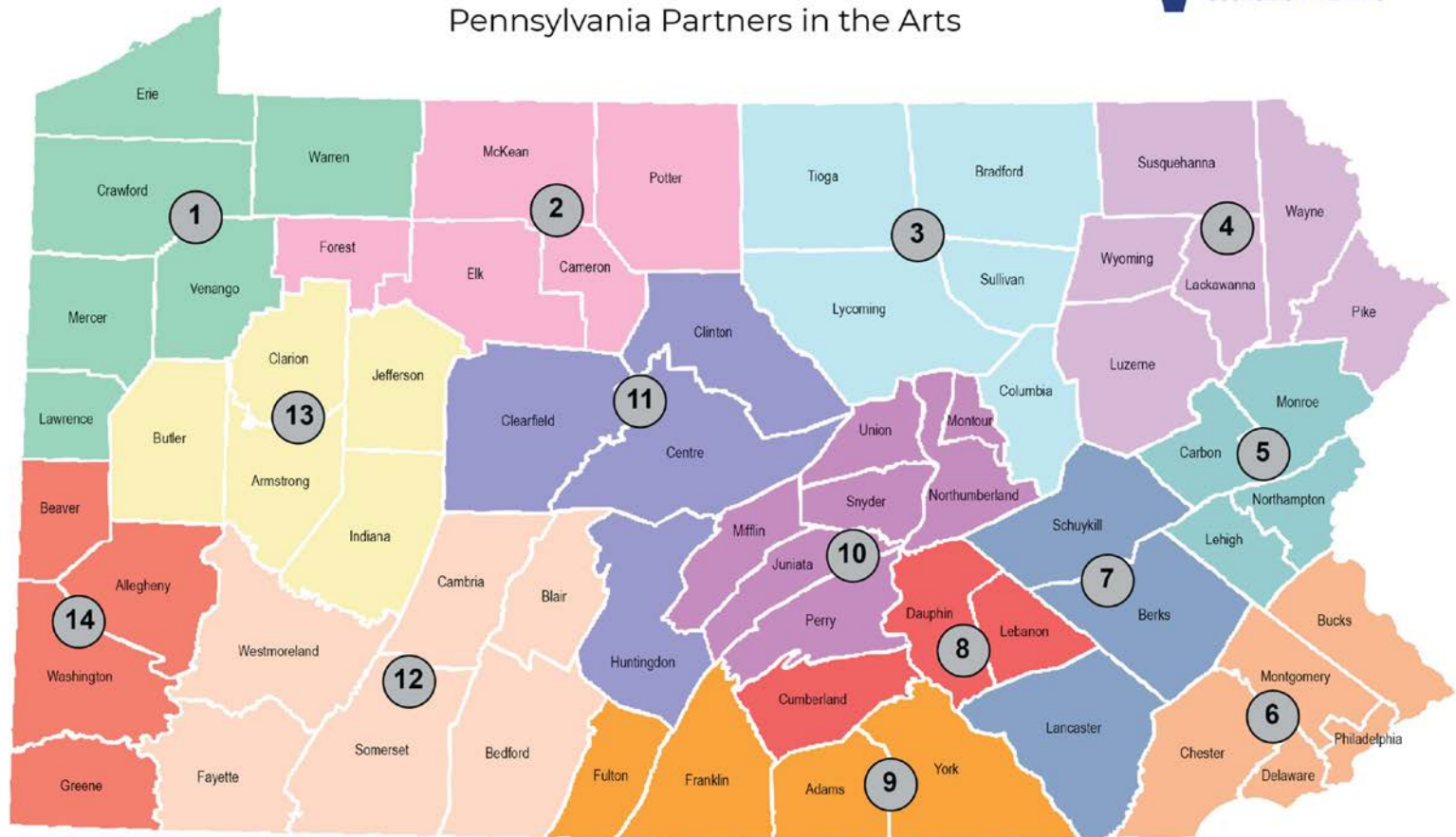
PCA is proud to support the DMVA mission to provide quality care for aging and disabled veterans, and to fulfill the PCA's goal to connect and increase Pennsylvanians' access to lifelong learning through the arts.

Studies show that access to the arts can boost health and well-being, ease feelings of sadness and isolation, and foster environments of understanding and inclusion.

Through our partnerships there are opportunities to support veteran creative entrepreneurs, provide art classes through service organizations and veteran homes and inspire people to engage with the arts as an opportunity to connect and heal.

COMBINED PARTNERSHIP MAP

Arts in Education
Folk & Traditional Arts
Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts



Music Vets

Film & Musical Healing Forums

[Music Vets - Trailer \(2022\)](#)

In the shadow of America's longest war, a veteran suicide crisis, and a surging mental health epidemic, three U.S. Military Veterans use music to heal from their physical and psychological wounds.

Music Vets tells the story of three proud U.S. military veterans in different stages of recovery from PTSD and/or Traumatic Brain Injuries. The stories in the film present the use of music for healing the self and connecting with others.

Music therapy is introduced as a non-pharmacological option to treatments that are often costly, debilitating, or sometimes even deadly. While the film's focus is on military populations, it shows how this under-studied and under-funded treatment can help *anyone* in crisis.



Music Vets

Film & Musical Healing Forums

With the help of the PCA Creative Catalyst grant, the filmmakers behind *Music Vets*, will launch a series of **Film & Musical Healing Forums** to reach specific PA communities.

- Planning up to 3 total Forums:
 - Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, & Harrisburg are the ideal locations.
 - We are seeking venues such as local theaters, university auditoriums, community centers, or large veterans facilities.

What is a Film & Musical Healing Forum?

- Free, engaging arts & educational programming.
- Forums will include:
 - A screening of the film with light refreshments.
 - Post-screening panels featuring music therapists, trauma experts, and representatives from organizations that work directly with our audiences.
 - Music therapy demonstrations – introductory sessions with techniques that audience members can incorporate into their own lives, including group music making and songwriting exercises.
 - Additional Musical Performances - featuring local Pennsylvania based musicians who believe in the mission behind music as a healing tool.

Music Vets

Film & Musical Healing Forums

Who will this serve?

Our goal is to help bring awareness to music as a therapeutic tool and trauma-focused care in general and to do it in an engaging and community-centered way.

- PA residents, with specific outreach to these groups:
 - Veterans
 - Returning citizens
 - “High-risk” youth - gun violence survivors & individuals impacted by the juvenile justice system.
- These Forums will help connect the dots and build bridges in awareness, care, and pathways towards wellness.
- Create an outlet for collaboration and discussion between these groups and the professionals that serve them.

Thank you!

Jamie Dunlap

Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning
jadunlap@pa.gov



AGING

Ms. Margo Coleman, Co-Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Work in partnership with Homeless Committee and Health Promotions Committee
- Continue Pension Poaching Campaign
- Review housing options for aging homeless veterans
- Collaborate with VISN 4 Homeless veterans Program Coordinator
- Schedule guest speakers to include FWL and Pittsburgh Veteran Community Partnership

Updates

- Connected Papa Pals with VISN 4 Clinical Lead Rehab & Extended Care Integrated Clinical Community

Challenges/Barriers

- Increasing the list of community contacts for Pension Poaching Campaign

HOMELESS

Mr. Brendan Auman, Co-Chair
Mr. Micah Snead, Co-Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Support the creation of a state Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Training/Information sharing on various programs to improve service delivery and available resources for homeless veterans
- Increase the number of veterans participating on the committee who are currently or were formerly experiencing homelessness
- Partner with Aging Committee to discuss potential solutions for aging veterans who experience housing instability and discuss ways to promote better communication with long-term care industry

Updates

- Venango County and DMVA are working collaboratively to use VASH Vouchers for a Veteran's Fairweather Lodge as a pilot program. Anticipate launching in March 2023
- February's meeting (Feb 16, 2023) will have a focus on Landlord Engagement and Housing Searches
- Hollywood Casino started donation options to the Veteran's Trust Fund
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released its new federal strategic plan: ["All In"](#)
- [Annual Homelessness Assessment Report \(AHAR\) Part 1](#) released: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness
- [Tax filing assistance](#) for low-income taxpayers

Challenges/Barriers

- Finding safe and affordable housing
- Available information about financial literacy
- Transportation in rural communities

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Crystal Houser, Chair

PA CareerLink[®]

Goals/Initiatives

- Serve veterans across 62 PA CareerLink[®] locations.

Updates

- State CY 2022 ... 25,968 veterans served
 - Served through JVSG, Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title I, and Trade workforce programs
 - 2,460 with SBEs receive intensive services through DVOP. This number is double the number in 2021.
- In 2022, DVOP pay grade elevated to that of the LVER.

Challenges/Barriers

- Rebuilding relationships lost during COVID.

Office of Administration – Veterans Preference Hiring

Goals/Initiatives

- Veterans' Preference Hires into State Government ... PA Military Code 51

Updates

- State Fiscal Year 2021-2022 ... over 900 veterans selected
 - 12% of commonwealth hires
 - Only 4% of PA's working age population are veterans
- Veteran population in Nation & State declining ... anticipate downslope

Challenges/Barriers

- Act 102 of 2020 ... clarifying language, experience & training as earned benefit
- Act 44 of 2022 ... “disability discharge tweak”

HIRE Vets Medallion Program

Goals/Initiatives

- Recognition Program for private business
 - Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Vets

Updates

- 2021/2022 Participation in PA
 - 41 recognized by DOL (6th most in US)
 - 10 small employer platinum
 - 1 medium employer platinum
 - 24 small employer gold
 - 5 medium employer gold
 - 1 large employer gold

Challenges/Barriers

- Effective marketing techniques on a wider scale

--SHORT BREAK--

HEALTH PROMOTIONS

Ms. Erica Nocho, Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Report on, and work to improve, any programs that promote whole health and trauma-informed care for veterans.
- Continue to promote and share resources or information regarding suicide prevention and intervention.
- Empowering behavior change and actions through increased knowledge about the needs of service members, veterans and families.

Updates

- Educational Awareness Campaign:
 - Reviewing distribution lists
 - Collecting content for campaign
 - Test run for our target audience
 - Tentative timeline for distribution Summer 2023
 - Saturation plan

- After the first round, we will incorporate lessons learned into a specific location and/or subpopulation to increase our ability to adequately know and reach the target audience.

Challenges/Barriers

- Using multiple platforms to get the message out- mixed media campaigns
- Barriers to treatment and non-clinical support services
- Keeping an eye on capacity issues, service gaps, and after-care planning
- Options for those with transportation issues/residing in rural areas; Bandwidth issues in rural PA

WOMEN VETERANS

Ms. Elizabeth Cooper, Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Partner with the Aging Committee
 - Create an in-person/hybrid town hall with a facilitator in a rural location.
- Pennsylvania Women Veteran License Plate
 - Remain Connected to COL Munch for updates, and from OVA
- Ally Murr/Celeste Bruchlacker
 - Producing a screening tool for justice involved women veterans.
 - Focusing on mental health, addictions, MST/PTSD, and how to better assist them while incarcerated at the VSU in SCIMuncy.
- Women Veterans Standown in June 2023
 - Collaborations to host a women veteran specific standown in Harrisburg June 2023.

Updates

- The committee has added several new members over the past year.
- There have been 6 referrals to WoVeN with successful completion of the Peer-to-Peer Support Training.
- Ongoing list of women veteran organizations for the women veteran's toolkit. Interviews will take place shortly as well as recruiting for advertisements.
- The Military Women's Memorial added another PA State Ambassador to assist Kathy Silvia.

Challenges/Barriers

- Reaching aging women veterans
- Technology divide amongst aging women veterans

JUDICIARY

Mr. Michael Carrington, Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Improve outreach efforts to veteran staff within the Department of Corrections (DOC) through collaboration with external agencies
- Identify veteran inmates within the DOC at classification to place them in veteran designated facilities (VDFs)
- Expand/enhance programming, workshops, and educational/employment opportunities within the veteran service units (VSUs)
- Increase the amount/availability of veteran-specific trainings and/or educational opportunities for employees/spouses/dependents
- Advocate for the creation/enhancement of veteran courts/tracks
- Educate those that represent veterans in the criminal justice system

Updates

- Committee welcomed parolee Avon Quiero Jr. to the monthly meeting held on 11/17/22
- Veteran Employee Workgroup discussing community symposium for veterans in summer 2023
- New DOC veteran identification component implemented on 11/30/22
- MOU remains pending between Dept. of Agriculture and Dept. of Corrections
- Intergovernmental Agreement in final phases between SCI Mercer VSU and Mercer County Veteran Treatment Court
- SCI Mercer American Legion Post 110 – First post to achieve 100% membership in the 28th District (106.67%)

Updates

- SCI Muncy will be hosting a “seed drive” during the month of February in order to plant new flowers, herbs and vegetables in their VSU Victory Garden. In 2022, the garden produced 2,300+ pounds of produce which was donated to the Central Food Bank in Williamsport as well as used in the institution’s salad bar and restaurant trades vocational class.
- DOC/PPB Agency “Veteran Registry Challenge” has connected at least 130 veteran employees to the DMVA site since 12/20/22
- Spring Veteran Employee Symposium for the Department of Corrections will occur at SCI Dallas 5/19/23
- As of 12/31/22, 424 inmate veterans were housed in DOC Veteran Service Units
- More than 20 “buddy checks” completed by Veteran Services Team in Nov/Dec

Challenges/Barriers

- Homeless veterans/redefining “homeless” for the incarcerated veteran population
- Nursing home care for HTP veterans that have been paroled or are approaching their maximum date of sentence
- Specialized programming for those incarcerated with PTSD and/or TBI (and an adequate number of professionals to deliver the program)
- Streamlined communications with contracted VA organizations tasked with compensation and pension exams of incarcerated veterans
- Technological needs continue to create barriers for PA VETConnect as well as effective networking between the VSUs

VETERAN OF THE QUARTER

- Veteran of the United States Army and Army Reserves
- Served as an Apache Crew Chief with two deployments to Iraq (2003 & 2004)
- Working for the PA DOC since December 2007
- Co-founder of Heroes Hearthstone Organization which focuses on post-traumatic growth for Vets and First Resp.



Eric Pimm

Sergeant, SCI Dallas



GOOD OF THE ORDER

CLOSING COMMENTS

DMVA WEBSITE: www.dmva.pa.gov

Sign up for the Veterans Registry and DMVA Digest!

www.register.dmva.pa.gov

NEXT MEETING:

May 3 at 1:00PM

Location: Dept. of Agriculture, 2301 N. Cameron St.

***All 2023 GAC-VS quarterly meetings will take place
on the 1st Wednesday of the month**