

Board Minutes
7 August 2015
Volunteers of America
1247 Santa Fe Dr., Denver, CO 80204

Dana Niemela, Chair, called the meeting to order at 0930 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle or harm's way and all service members.

Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff & Guests

Board Members Present:

Dana Niemela, Chair
Duane Dailey, Vice-Chair-Not Present
Rene Simard, Secretary-Not Present
Hollie Caldwell, Member
Christopher Holden, Member
William "Robby" Robinson, Member
Jack Rudder, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA, Deputy Director
Reuben Mestas, CDVA Director
Claire Dean, CDVA Administrative Assistant
Gail Hoagland, DMVA VAG Administrator

Guests Present:

Brenton Hutson, Division Director, Volunteers of America
Brandon Young, Director of Development, Team Red White and Blue
Rossina Schroer-Santiago, Denver Human Services, Veteran Services
Constance Tatro, Denver Human Services, Veteran Services

Approval of Minutes from June

Unanimously accepted

Roll Call of Members

Chris Holden: Having served in the Army for 25 ½ years, Chris is now employed with defense contractor Akima located in Colorado Springs. Chris has worked on Outreach in the Colorado Springs area, particularly transition activities for Peterson AFB and the Air Force Academy.

Jack Rudder: After retiring from the Air Force, Jack worked as a high school teacher and principal. Since 2012, Jack has served as the Rio Grande County Service Officer and is working with a local Rio Grande County non-profit.

Hollie Caldwell: Soon after high school, Hollie enlisted with the Air Force. She served 10 years as an Air Force nurse and is currently the Dean at The School of Nursing at Platt College. Ten percent of her students are veterans. Hollie is very active with Wounded Warriors.

Dana Niemela: Dana served as a Logistics Officer for the U.S. Navy from 1997-2005. She is currently the Manager for Veterans Services for the City and County of Denver.

Robby Robinson: Having served in the Army for over 30 years, Robby worked as the Deputy Director for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs up until 2009. He has been on the Board since 2011 and is most proud of the organization's grant programs.

Guest Introduction – Dana Niemela

Rossina Schroeer-Santiago and Constance Tatro, Employment Case Manager and Community Resource Navigator, respectively, explained their roles with Denver Human Services, Veterans Services. They take into account a veteran's interests, needs and strengths and work history to help them reintegrate in a career with long-term sustainability.

Division Director Brenton Hutson with Volunteers of America explained their one-stop for veterans that within the shared space, various non-profits can provide assistance for food, healthcare, shelter, education and employment. It is staffed with volunteers and peer navigators to aid in mentoring veterans. Though the doors have been opened since July 1, 2015, the grand opening ceremony with Governor Hickenlooper will be held next Friday. A \$1million grant was awarded from the Bill Daniels Fund. Collaboration between non-profits and lack of funding are two of the gaps in service that have been identified. One of the goals is to end chronic homelessness and have the capability to provide a home within 30-days. The lack of affordable rentals in Denver has been a real challenge. Volunteers of America is looking to build partnerships with area landlords to provide affordable housing. The diverse geology of Colorado brings a challenge to finding and helping homeless veterans.

A brief tour of the facilities followed.

Brandon Young, Director of Development for Team Red White and Blue discussed his organization and how it aims to grow authentic relationships within the community. The enrichment equation consists of a strong focus on positive health behaviors, people and purpose. There are currently 80,000 members with 110 new members daily in the U.S. gained

mainly through outreach like regional races and gyms. Team Red White and Blue has a turnkey operating model with a budget from the national organization that allows local leadership, under the guidance of the Regional Director to run the chapter, allowing the personality of the community emerge. Colorado currently has two chapters, one in Colorado Springs and the other in Denver. Fort Collins will be starting a chapter soon. Chris Holden added that Team Red White and Blue is successful in utilizing social media, targeting post 9-11 veterans and their family members. Upcoming events include a hike of Mt. Bierstadt and Microsoft will sponsor this year's Old Glory relay that travels across the U.S. over September 11. Dana shared her story of competing in the Marine Corp marathon.

Mickey Hunt: Mickey will be attending a ribbon cutting ceremony in Granby in September. During a visit to Westcliffe, Colorado Serves met with older, retired veterans. The new Custer County Service Officer will hold a monthly veterans meeting to foster community involvement. Mickey will travel to the Grand Junction Mental Health Summit next week. The Colorado National Guard Chinooks deployed to Kuwait to serve that region. There will be no budget increase this year for decision items. Though the Grand Junction Armory/Veterans One-stop will not be approved of this year, it will stay on the Colorado Joint Budget Committees unapproved items list, which will allow for further discussion. Ben Mestas and Mickey met with members of the Department of Local Affairs last month to discuss the unused VASH Vouchers in Denver and Colorado Springs. Denver did not use the vouchers because it does not have any affordable housing available. Rally.6, a successful non-profit in Texas, will be locating to El Paso County, Colorado. State Veterans Community Living Centers will be visited over October 15, 2015.

Ben Mestas: A record was set with 299 burials at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado in Grand Junction for Fiscal Year 2014-2015. Construction of new columbariums and emplacement of additional vaults will be complete with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 11. State Service Officers will be travelling to parts of Colorado to conduct semi-annual training. House Bill 1315 passed, giving additional money for County Service Officers. Pitkin County will now be hiring their own Service Officer and Custer County has made their Service Officer full-time. Ben mentioned that there is a small increase in travel budget for the Board due to elections of the two Board members from rural communities. Travel Expense Statements need to be turned in to Claire Dean. Access to DD214's will be done electronically in 2016. Both Claire Dean and Diane Ricci are in the process of getting access to electronic DD214's. Duane Dailey will need to report on the September Staff Outreach and the April Training Conference to the Governor in the Governor's Report due in December.

Robby Robinson: Vicky Manley, Director of State Veterans Community Living Centers, is no longer working for the State of Colorado. Services for Ken Melcher will be next Friday at 10am. He was involved with the United Veterans Committee, and well respected in and around the Denver area.

Gail Hoagland: Over half of the Grantees attended last month's webinars. Meeting new requirements will be a challenge for some. Currently there are two contracts pending. Many

have requested advances and the accounting department is working very hard to get them paid in a timely manner. The idea of a Quarterly Recognition Letter given to a Grantee from the Board was discussed. Dana would like to set up a Standard Operating Procedure for next review at the next Board meeting. Robby is concerned that the recognition will be coming solely from one person's interaction with the Grantee. Information gathered from the veterans' surveys could hold a certain weight.

Dana Niemela: The Strategic Planning Committee last met in 2012. Dana would like the Board's opinion on whether or not to have an annual Strategic Planning meeting. A Strategic Planner is being hired by the Department and will begin full-time in the fall of this year. Jack Rudder mentioned that he appreciates the opportunity to serve on the Board and doesn't mind attending the meetings as long as it is worth his while. Robby believes that having a Strategic Plan like the one that expired would be a waste of time, since it was seldom looked at or used. The Board tends to be reactive rather than proactive. Dana suggested that she would like to change that and perhaps a briefer, more focused plan be considered. The Board is already obligated to meet once a month.

Future Meetings

11 Sep – Welcome Home Montrose

Dana would like to hold future Board meetings in Rio Grande County, CSU at Fort Collins, Grand Junction, Sterling, Conifer, Las Animas and Steamboat, Pueblo and Colorado Springs.

Old Business

New Business

Dana would like each Board member to ask themselves why they are involved in this Board, what they hope to accomplish over the next year and if they have any causes or interests. Answers are due from each member at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 11:54am