

Board Minutes
11 September 2015
Welcome Home Montrose
11 South Park Ave., Montrose, CO 81401

Dana Niemela, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1000 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
Rene Simard, Secretary-Not Present
Hollie Caldwell, Member-Not Present
Christopher Holden, Member-Not Present
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:

Melanie Kline, Founder/CEO, Welcome Home Montrose
Emily Smith, Executive Director, Welcome Home Montrose
Erick Goff, Operations Director, the Serenity House, Inc.

Approval of Minutes from August

Unanimously accepted

Robby Robinson: The Denver Veterans Monument will be rededicated on November 10, 2015 at 11am, marking its 25th anniversary. Board members are strongly encouraged to attend. Rene Simard is an elected member of the monument's trust fund. Robby has been selected to serve as the Board representative for the Colorado Community Living Centers.

Duane Dailey: Everyone is invited to attend the Veterans Day Breakfast on November 11 at Snow Mountain Ranch in Grand County.

Jack Rudder: A rededication is being held at the Homelake cemetery today.

Dana Niemela: One of the duties of the Board is to inform the Governor and the rest of the State on the progress and challenges of organizations who aid Colorado veterans. We would like to know how we can aid your community or celebrate it as necessary. Dana extended her gratitude for allowing the Board to meet at Welcome Home Montrose and looks forward to learning more about the work they do for veterans.

Guest Introduction – Dana Niemela

Founder and CEO Melanie Kline of Welcome Home Montrose discussed her organization and how it interacts with the community. Since opening three years ago, they have helped over 1,000 veterans, including the 100 new veterans from 2014.

Executive Director Emily Smith explained that the “Canteen Room” which is located in the heart of the center, is reconfigured throughout the day to accommodate the veteran’s coffee social, music groups and various meetings. All of the artwork in the room was donated by veterans. Medical equipment, donated from the community, is given free of charge to veterans in need. Dana asked if the Montrose veteran population were made up of those who grew up in the area or were transplants. Melanie responded that while there are some who grew up in the area and have since moved back after serving their country, some moved to Montrose because of word of mouth.

Erick Goff, Operations Director of the Serenity House spoke of the challenges of funding for the safe transitional home. Vouchers are not distributed for transitional housing and Serenity House does not qualify for grant per diem money. At present, there are no homeless shelters in the area. Serenity House currently houses 10 people. Erick hopes to get the house entrusted. HUD/VASH vouchers are now available in the area. Many landlords in western part of the County have decided to lower the rent for veterans.

Duane asked how many of the area veterans live off the grid. Melanie replied that there are 12 veterans that choose to live off the grid and eight who are actually homeless. Because there is a VA clinic established in Montrose, the veterans are unable to use their Choice cards. Mental healthcare is available in the area as well. A discussion about the Choice card ensued. With the economy on the upswing, more permanent jobs are available in Montrose with the average job seeker between the ages of 35-45.

A brief tour of the facilities followed.

Kelly of Colorado Serves spoke briefly about the policy academy for behavioral health. After running out of energy, the group is deciding on what to do next. Mickey Hunt added that the Colorado Serves efforts are the same as the CBVA Boards efforts and would like CDMVA to take over the outreach and possibly create a subcommittee. He would like to have someone like

Kelly as the Board's liaison to Colorado Serves. Dana added that getting involved with Colorado Serves would fulfill the advisory capacity of the Board. Jack Rudder stated that the Board should exert influence. Robby Robinson inquired about who would pay for the program and would like the Colorado Serves mission statement in writing. A lengthy discussion followed and it was decided that the topic will need to be revisited at another time. Both Mickey and Dana will put together a written description of Colorado Serves, including its mission and anticipated outcomes, and provide it to the Board.

Mickey Hunt: A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Grand Junction on November 11. Mickey visited the Naval Seabee Project in Grand County yesterday. The Women Veteran's Conference will be held September 12. A new VA Director for the Eastern Medical Center will in place around October 2. The State Veterans Community Living Centers will be visited on October 15 and 16.

Ben Mestas: State Service Officers will be travelling to parts of Colorado to conduct semi-annual training. They will cover such topics as the Federal digit to digit program, CVA26, developing regional partnerships, grant programs, Choice card clarification and fully developed claims. The goal is to increase outreach and thus decrease appeals. Access to DD214's will be done electronically in 2016. Claire Dean, Hillary Hutson and Diane Ricci are in the process of getting access to electronic DD214's.

Gail Hoagland: Some grantees are struggling with reimbursement documentation. The grant program will be redesigned and need the Boards review next month. Applications have not been filled out properly because Grantees have not completely read the policy letter. A discussion ensued about who can apply for the various grants. There is confusion as to whether Veterans Service Organizations can apply for Veterans Assistance Grants. The Department policy says no – that they cannot apply for Veterans Assistance Grants. They can apply for the VTF Grants. The law says nonprofits serving veterans and government agencies can apply for the Assistance Grants and the Veterans Service organizations are nonprofits per IRS rulings; therefore they should be allowed to apply for Veterans Assistance Grants according to some members of those organizations. The policy needs review.

Future Meetings

02 Oct – Florence/Pueblo

04 Nov – Wings over the Rockies, Aurora Salute to Veterans

04 Dec – Fort Collins

Old Business

New Business

Meeting adjourned 12:25pm