

This is a Text Block. Use this to provide text...

## REGION 8 VETERANS COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

FEBRUARY 2016

NEWSLETTER



The Region 8 Veterans Community Action Team is a community-integrated system, offering support services, resources and programs to veterans and their families. As a part of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency's Veterans Community Action Team program, our role is to identify solutions for gaps in Veteran services, reduce duplication of efforts and make it easier for Veterans to connect with local opportunities in education, employment, healthcare and quality of life.



Click here to become a member of the VCAT!

# Region 8 VCAT

Hello All

I am delighted to introduce this first edition of the Region 8 VCAT newsletter. We intend to make it a quarterly publication and to use it to keep you posted with news and developments which relates to Region 8 VCAT. If your organization has something to share please let us know. You can submit your stories to the leadership committee.

Elena Bridges  
Veterans Services Regional Coordinator  
Altarum Institute

---

### Meet your RVCAT 8 Leadership Team

- Patrick Lothamer, Chair R8VCAT, SSVF Service Coordinator, Volunteers of America  
[plothamer@voami.org](mailto:plothamer@voami.org)
- Stoney Summey, Co-Chair R8VCAT, Director, St. Joseph County Veterans Services  
[summey@stjosephcountymi.org](mailto:summey@stjosephcountymi.org)
- Cassandra Stump, Secretary R8VCAT, Family Assistance Specialist, Michigan Army National Guard Family Programs  
[stumpcassandra@gmail.com](mailto:stumpcassandra@gmail.com)
- Michael Wilson, Region 8 Coordinator, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency/Michigan Association of Counties, [wilson@micounties.org](mailto:wilson@micounties.org)
- Brent Haddow, On Campus Counselor, Veteran Affairs - VETSUCCESS Program  
[brent.haddow@va.gov](mailto:brent.haddow@va.gov)



Check out a calendar of statewide Veteran events!

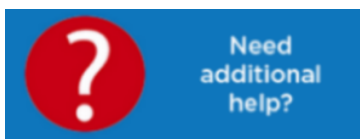
- Troy Hollenbeck Veterans Employment Specialist, Volunteers of America , [thollenbeck@voami.org](mailto:thollenbeck@voami.org)
- Matthew Newman, Health Systems Specialist, Veteran Affairs - Battle Creek Medical Center [matthew.newman@va.gov](mailto:matthew.newman@va.gov)
- Chad Dillion, Constituent Services Representative Congressman Fred Upton, [Chadwick.Dillon@mail.house.gov](mailto:Chadwick.Dillon@mail.house.gov)
- Colin Lampson, President KVCC Student Veterans of America, [colin.lampson@kvcc.edu](mailto:colin.lampson@kvcc.edu)

Click our state to find a Veterans Benefit Counselor



### Next R8VCAT Bi-Monthly Meeting

- March 29, 2016, 10:00AM - 12:00PM (Registration and networking starts at 9:30AM)
- Kellogg Community College - 450 North Avenue. (Student Center, Kellogg Room). Battle Creek, MI
- Register: <https://region-8vcat-24march2016-meeting.eventbrite.com>
- Topic: What's the difference, DMVA, MVAA, VA?



### MVAA: Removing barriers for Michigan veterans in 2016

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency was created in 2013 to connect those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and their families to the benefits they've earned. Over the course of the past three years, the agency has strived to do just that by breaking down the barriers they face in four main areas –

education, employment, health care and quality of life.

Much has been accomplished in each area, but there is still much to do in 2016 and beyond.

### ***Education***

Last year, MVAA teamed up with the Michigan College Access Network to create the Veteran Education Initiative. The partnership places veteran resource representatives on 15 college campuses throughout the state, helping student veterans succeed as they pursue a higher education. The goal for this year is to extend the program to additional college campuses – allowing more VRRs to provide one-on-one support to thousands of student veterans.

### ***Employment***

Since the creation of the Veteran-Friendly Employer program, more than 40 organizations have committed to recruiting, hiring and training veteran talent. MVAA supports these efforts by sharing best practices after a veteran is hired – such as mentorship and rotation programs to help veterans identify where they would best fit in a company – and going forward, the agency will also help these organizations develop better recruiting strategies and HR trainings.

MVAA will also work with colleges and universities to identify in-demand skills and experience companies will be seeking in years to come.

### ***Health Care***

In support of the Mental Health Commission Report, a mental health screening tool was created to encourage veterans to start a conversation about their own mental health and how they can seek help. Business cards with information about the online mental health screening were provided to benefits counselors and Veterans Treatment Court personnel to distribute to local veterans and their families. The card lists the screening tool website in addition to the veterans' crisis line number.

In the coming year, MVAA will continue to address mental health challenges – working with college counselors to prepare them for student veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injuries or military sexual trauma.

### ***Quality of Life***

Gov. Rick Snyder created the Interagency Council on Homelessness last year and tasked it with developing a 10-year plan to end homelessness in the state. By summer 2016, the council – which includes representatives from MVAA, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and the Department of Health and Human Services – will deliver that plan to the governor, and efforts will begin to end veteran and general homelessness.

To accomplish this goal, MVAA will work alongside MSHDA and DHHS to secure federal and state funding and identify other federal, state, local and non-profit partners.

Many veterans who call 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838) request housing and homelessness assistance, and MVAA often relies on MSHDA and community partners identified through the VCAT to assist these callers. Once veterans have secured stable housing, VCATs can also step in to connect them with a local network of service providers, employers, educators and health care providers.

Ending veteran homelessness is a task that will require cooperation on every level – but through our VCATs and their networks of local service organizations, MVAA will work to house those Michigan veterans experiencing or on the brink of homelessness in 2016.

---



**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE | Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

## Get in the Know

*Dynamic Networking Event and VCP Quarterly Meeting*

Presented by the Veteran Community Partnership and the Battle Creek VA Medical Center

Thursday, March 3, 2016, 8:30AM - 12:00PM  
Battle Creek VA Medical Center, Building 6  
Auditorium  
[Register Here!](#)

---

### Organization Spotlight: **Family Assistance Centers**



**Family Assistance Centers** are located through out the state and are organized to provide regional support to geographically dispersed **Service Members, Veterans and Families**. The mission of a FAC is to provide information, referral, outreach and support services to the **Military Community** regardless of branch affiliation.

During times of deployment, the FAC is designed to be a focal point for families to get information and assistance with referral to the appropriate service agencies and meet the needs that are associated with the deployment.

Family Assistance Centers are tasked with providing 6 essential services. Those services are: Crisis Intervention, ID Cards and DEERS, TRICARE Health and Dental, Legal Assistance, Financial Management, and Information and Referral. Additionally the Family Assistance Team conducts briefings to help prepare families and Military members on various topics related to well being and knowledge of Military lifestyle. The Family Assistance Centers also provide information on benefits and entitlements for Military Service Members and their families, as well as, make wellness calls to designated points of contact during a deployment.

You can visit the Family Assistance Center by going to the Michigan Family Programs website at <http://minalnationalguard.com> then click on Family Assistance Center or contact the Family Assistance Center Coordinator at 517-481-9889, [raphael.r.weaver.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:raphael.r.weaver.ctr@mail.mil).



*Southwest Prosperity Region, created as a part of Gov. Rick Synder's Regional Prosperity Initiative, includes Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties.*

Copyright © *\*|CURRENT\_YEAR|\* \*|LIST:COMPANY|\**, All rights reserved.  
*\*|IFNOT:ARCHIVE\_PAGE|\* \*|LIST:DESCRIPTION|\**

**Our mailing address is:**

*\*|HTML:LIST\_ADDRESS\_HTML|\* \*|END:IF|\**

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

*\*|IF:REWARDS|\* \*|HTML:REWARDS|\* \*|END:IF|\**