FEBRUARY 2016

2016: A Transitional Year

With a new year, we bring about change. As the VCAT continues to grow in this region, we identified the need for a more regional perspective to guide forward our commitment to “engage, education, and act”. In 2016, we plan on having quarterly meetings with each meeting focused on a different pillar – healthcare, employment, education, and quality of life. We will also be moving the meetings around the region.

NEW Online Feature!

Since we will be moving around the region, we don’t expect everyone to be at all of the meetings. If you are unable to attend the meeting in-person, you can listen to and view the presentations by registering for the webinar.

The next meeting will be in April in Tuscola County with a focus on employment. The Eventbrite invitation and webinar link will be sent out soon!

Click here to become a member of the Region 6 VCAT!
Check out a calendar of statewide Veteran events!

Also, you can share your events with the entire region by using the Events App and Calendar in the Region 6 VCAT Podio workspace.

The regional rotation began with Lapeer County where members of the VCAT held the November meeting at the Historical downtown courthouse.

Podio: An Online Collaborative Platform

A 45-minute “Podio Basics” webinar is available on-demand by clicking here. We hope to see more people using Podio’s features such as the events calendar, status updates, member/organization directory, and assistance requests. Podio will be a great tool to connect us throughout the year as we learn about new information in the region.

To join Podio, fill out the membership form here.
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
Organization Spotlight: Veterans Helping Veterans

Veterans know they are stronger together.

One of the results from Altarum Institute's 2015 Region 6 Community Assessment Report was that Veterans share their information and resources through word of mouth. Even with the amount of technology our society uses in their daily lives, face to face conversations are still the most effective form of communication in the Veteran community.

This is one of the main reasons the Veteran Support Groups came into play. The purpose of the group was to provide a safe place for Veterans to share experiences, resources and expand their Veteran network. The results exceeded expectations and there has been much demand for more groups. Since our inaugural meeting in September in Lapeer County we have expanded to Genesee County, Tuscola County and will be holding our first meeting in St. Clair county next month.

For more information on your local support group please contact:

Kate Logan (248) 978-2513
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Prosperity Region 6, created as a part of Gov. Rick Synder’s Regional Prosperity Initiative, includes Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Saint Clair, Sanilac, Shiawassee, & Tuscola Counties.