

## 10/3/2016 Portland MMCN Meeting Notes

# in Attendance: 17

### Individual Notes

Chris Kotch, OIF/OEF/ND Outreach Specialist for the Portland Vet Center:

- Our new fearless leader
- Chris' contact info: Christopher.Kotch@va.gov; 207.780.3584.

Laura Allen, Veteran Outreach Specialist at Maine Bureau of Veteran Services:

- Laura's contact info: laura.e.allen@maine.gov, 207.430.5816

Rob McCann, Congressional Wounded Warrior Fellow/Veterans Constituent Services & Field Representative at Congresswoman Chellie Pingree's office:

- Rob is doing case work and outreach to Veterans & Service Members in District 1.
- Rob's contact info: rob.mccann@mail.house.gov; 207.774.5019.

Azura Meadows, Veteran & volunteer with VAST & IAVA:

- Veterans Adaptive Sports & Training at Pineland Farms offers a wide variety of recreation activities for veterans with physical disabilities, TBI, and PTSD. Every Wednesday, rain or shine!
- IAVA holds 'Vet Togethers' to connect OEF/OIF veterans: <http://iava.org/vettogether/>
- Azura's contact information: [javasouthernmaine@gmail.com](mailto:javasouthernmaine@gmail.com).

Keri Karsten, Universal Services Advocate at Veterans, Inc.

- Keri's contact info: [kerikarsten@veteransinc.org](mailto:kerikarsten@veteransinc.org); 207.240.2566.

Sue Gold, Coordinator of the Vet to Vet Project at SMAAA:

- Vet to Vet pairs volunteers with veterans for home visits, companionship, resource linking, mentorship, etc.
- Sue's contact info: [sgold@SMAAA.org](mailto:sgold@SMAAA.org); 207.396.6500 ext. 600.

Chaplain (COL) Andy Gibson, Director of Deployment Cycle Support, Maine Army National Guard:

- DCS supports MENG families before, during, and after mobilizations & deployments
- Chaplain Gibson's contact info: [andrew.l.gibson.mil@mail.mil](mailto:andrew.l.gibson.mil@mail.mil); 207.430.5770.

Rob Liscord, Veteran Legal Services Outreach Coordinator at Pine Tree Legal Assistance:

- PTLA partners with Preble Street Veterans Housing Services and has a Medical/Legal partnership with Togus providing legal assistance to Veteran patients.
- Rob's contact info: [rliscord@ptla.org](mailto:rliscord@ptla.org); 207.400.3232.

Jamie Lynn Bice, volunteer with Pine Tree Legal Assistance & JD Candidate:

- Jamie Lynn's contact info: [Jamie.bice@maine.edu](mailto:Jamie.bice@maine.edu)

Kelly Sweet, Army National Guard soldier & Specialist at Maine Military Family Assistance Center:

- The MFAC operates a hotline (1.888.365.9287) to assist NG service members and family members, and act as a resource referral for Veterans and other branches in Maine.
- Kelly's contact info: [Kelly.r.sweet.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:Kelly.r.sweet.ctr@mail.mil); office: 207.430.5780.

John Bates, Community member working on Veterans issues:

- John's contact info: [jbates1@maine.rr.com](mailto:jbates1@maine.rr.com).

Jen Fullmer, Executive Director at Boots2Roots:

- Boots2Roots focuses on supporting Active Duty Veterans transitioning back home after service.
- Jen's contact info: [Boots2Roots@gmail.com](mailto:Boots2Roots@gmail.com); 325.660.8661.

Lorraine Spaulding, Coordinator of Veterans Services at University of Southern Maine:

- Lorraine's contact info: [lorraine.spaulding@maine.edu](mailto:lorraine.spaulding@maine.edu); 207.780.5232.

Mark Cafiso, LVER at Portland Career Center:

- Advocates with employers to hire Veterans; creates partnerships with employers and the MCC.
- Hire A Vet is almost to their goal already!!
- Mark's contact info: [Mark.J.Cafiso@Maine.gov](mailto:Mark.J.Cafiso@Maine.gov); 207.822.3344.

Holly Fleming, Job Developer at Rural Veteran Coordination Pilot/Consultant at Portland Career Center:

- RVCP is running through May 2017!
- Holly's contact info: [holly.a.fleming@maine.gov](mailto:holly.a.fleming@maine.gov); 207.822.3312.

Rhiannon Guzelian, Job Developer/Career Placement at Easter Seals:

- Works with Veterans through the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) to secure employment.
- Rhiannon's contact info: [rguzelian@eastersealsme.org](mailto:rguzelian@eastersealsme.org), 207.317.0337.

Tony Silvernagel, Membership Development Manager at Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce:

- Tony's contact info: 207.772.2811, [tsilvernagel@portlandregion.com](mailto:tsilvernagel@portlandregion.com)

### **Special Guests**

- Tony Silvernagel from Portland Chamber of Commerce—The Chamber has over 1300 members; Tony is responsible for all new members. Baseline membership is \$330/year, and members can attend networking events. Tony is an Active Duty Army Veteran, new to Maine in July. Originally

from South Dakota, Tony spend 7 years on Active Duty, holds an MBA from Kansas, and is now a full-time student in Leadership Studies at USM and a Teammate volunteer at Boots 2 Roots. The Chamber will be highlighting Boots 2 Roots for their community corner at Eggs & Issues in November.

- Laura Allen from Maine Bureau of Veteran Services— MBVS is the state advocate, by statute, for ME Veterans. Advocacy on state-wide level with legislature/governor, individually through POA w/ VA claims, helping with issues (landlord, etc.). Help through all stages transition, children, education, cemetery.

The Bureau's revamped website has been out for 5 months. Please connect with them on social media; newsletter will be coming later in the month. Community network of resources: "Events" tab has calendar with google events/flyers. Please check the calendar for competing events so we aren't cannibalizing audience. Send any events you want to advertise to Laura! She tries to update the calendar about 2 months out. There are over 380 resources across the state on the resource map. Click on the icon for resources, search by county, by state, category. This is a living tool with regular updates, so please send organizational info to Laura to be added. Resources were vetted by Laura. Conversely, if you know that an org is decommissioned, please let her know. VSO assistance and field offices: all contact info and hours there. There is also a primer on VA claims process. Latest news feature, navigation tool on homepage to help with general categories of questions. The "About" tab has a Media Kit, which is a clearinghouse of stats and demographics for Maine. "Benefits" tab: state and federal benefits. "Forms" section has all the forms one might need: DD-214 requests, park passes, etc. Give Laura feedback on the site at any time.

Legislative implications: LD 1612 brought us the tuition waiver for guard, additional funding to bureau to hire 2 mobile service officers, UMaine Schools will have vet coordinators if they have enrollment of 25 or more veterans, electronic infrastructure for claims process (claims & interaction data, authority for MOUs with agencies that have veteran data –BMV, fisheries & wildlife, DHHS, etc. most comprehensive database!). LD 1658 hiring preference—any vet that meets minimum requirements for that job is guaranteed an interview.

### Other Discussion

Chris: Portland Vet Center is joining up on job fairs w/ Career Center, and putting together more life courses/one-time events. Recently did a housing seminar with Maureen Best of Avesta (poorly attended; weeknight), and did a credit seminar last Friday. (Azura suggested putting testimonies on flyers in the future). PVC family pumpkin carving event—**any farms that might be interested in contributing pumpkins by 26th??**

Keri: Vets Inc facility in Lewiston has **4 open rooms** for male veterans!

Rob: For agencies looking for rental listings for clients, Landlord Associations may be a good starting point to inquire about listing rentals. Southern Maine Landlord Association:  
<http://www.smlamaine.com/>.

Jack: working on TAP program adjustments for transitioning Active Duty members. Advocating to bring Veterans Court to Cumberland County (FYI: Veterans Court is a diversionary court for Veterans, including felonies, who work with a panel of professionals—in court, psych, etc. plead guilty, if they complete

program, it will be reduced to misdemeanor. Must see judge weekly. Veterans Case Manager: 207.485.4315. More info at: [http://courts.maine.gov/maine\\_courts/drug/codvc.html](http://courts.maine.gov/maine_courts/drug/codvc.html)) Jack has sent letters to/is working with County Commissioners and Governor to ask why there isn't a Veterans Court in CC. CHP Gibson offered that they had attempted to replicate the court in Androscoggin, but the DA that was pushing for it got ill. Judge Nancy Mills has left the court; there is a new judge now.

Azura: IAVA & Portland VFW will be in parade together, if anyone is interested in joining them!

Kelly: Christmas Across Maine program has begun for anyone interested in sponsoring a National Guard family for the holiday! Contact Kelly for more info.

### **Events**

- October 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>: Vet to Vet is holding a volunteer training for new volunteers! If interested, please contact Sue Gold at SMAAA.
- Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>: Homeless Stand Down at Togus VA in Augusta. There are pick up points in Portland. Togus VA does a 1-day for homeless veterans with medical care, legal, financial, employment, toiletries, clothing, etc. Vets won't lose their bed at their home shelter—Togus has a deal to reserve beds at pick-up spots. Questions? Rob McCann can put you in touch or contact Susie Whittington directly at 207.623.8411 ext. 6336.
- Thursday, November 10, 2015 at 1:00 PM at DiMillo's Boardwalk: unveiling the Heroes Wall with Easter Seals/Veterans Count.
- Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup> 11:00 AM: Veterans Luncheon at Rotary Club in Portland. Susan Collins will be present. Max 300 attendees.
- Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>: Togus 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event
- Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-9:30 PM at Gritty's in Portland: Boots 2 Roots is having a community pint night support our transitioning veterans! Meet the team, learn about our organization, and have a lot of fun!

### **Next Meeting**

- January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from 5:00-6:30 PM. We will meet at the Chamber of Commerce on 443 Congress Street in Portland. Street parking or Elm St Garage; 175 Lancaster parking may be available. Come around Elm St side to be let in (building is locked after hours).