

A White Paper

**Channeling the “Sea of Goodwill”
to
Sustain the “Groundswell of Support”**
Transitioning from Concept to Application

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Warrior and Family Support

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Preface: The “Sea of Goodwill”

Purpose

There is a “Sea of Goodwill” that flows along many paths, at varying rates or speeds, which ebbs and flows into almost every community and neighborhood. The “Sea of Goodwill” is not a specific Department of Defense (DoD) initiative or government program, but rather a description of the desire across the country to support Service members and veterans. This paper briefly discusses the background of the “Sea of Goodwill” and then focuses on ideas and tasks that have a meaningful impact on building public awareness, encouraging community involvement, and promoting community services for Service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen.¹

Background

The level of support to our returning military, veterans, and their families is high. Active Component Service members, National Guard / Reserves, and Veterans of all generations have shared experiences and needs, as do their families. Our nation is filled with countless donors. They include private, public, faith-based, civic, governmental, and non-governmental organizations whose sole desire is to care for our warriors and families. Communities are comprised of colleges, universities, local agencies, the best of the many national-level warrior, veteran, and family programs, local benevolent organizations, foundations, and the generosity of the American people – all are the basis for the support needed to ensure and improve long term quality of life for our returning Service members, veterans and their families. This overwhelming desire to support is a “Groundswell of Support.”

¹ * “Service members” refers specifically to serving active duty, reserve, or National Guard.

** “Veterans” refers to discharged or retired Service members; anyone who has worn the uniform.

*** “Families” refers specifically to the immediate family members of a Service member or veteran.

**** “Families of the fallen” refers to “Gold Star” families and the families of Service members who have died in the line of duty.

The outpouring of concern, and the subsequent movement to action on the part of millions of Americans to embrace warriors and their families, is overwhelming. This is more than a pool of do-gooders—it is a “Groundswell of Support.” But the question, and the challenge, is how can communities across the country best leverage this “Sea of Goodwill” to improve the quality of life of our returning Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen. The “Sea of Goodwill” initiative is about matching a community’s desire to help with the needs of Service members, veterans, their families, and families of the fallen as they transition. It is the recognition that independent groups working together inside a community-based model can do things to improve long-term quality of life that government just cannot do.

Education; secure and fulfilling employment; and the ability to access health care; information, options, and services are the “trinity” for reintegration success (see Figure 1). Education forms a base from which to build a solid foundation. Equally important are the two sides of the trinity finding meaningful employment and access to health care options and alternatives. Additionally, our returning Service members have proven their desire to serve our nation, and many want to continue their service in diverse areas following their transition to civilian society. Our nation can enable this continuum of service by helping to provide a continuum of care addressing the needs outlined by the trinity.

More than anything else, this concept calls for community leaders to connect with those who served and to look for a way to really assist those veterans and families who are returning. They are great people who will contribute to the community in the future. Community leaders focusing the “Sea of Goodwill” will need to employ four fundamental aspects of management and growth. The “Focus” Venn diagram is designed to illustrate the interconnectedness of Leading, Training, Maintaining, and Caring as related to reaching the Trinity (see figure 2).

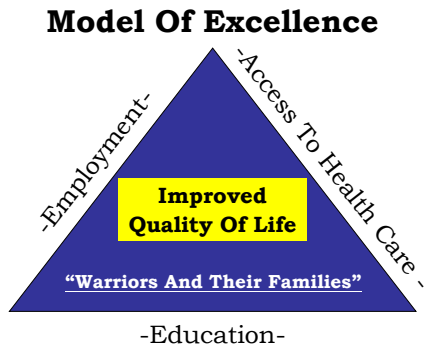


Figure 1: Model of Excellence

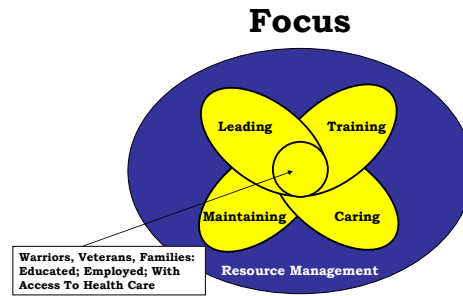


Figure 2: Focus

Goals

The primary goal of channeling the “Sea of Goodwill” is to sustain the “Groundswell of Support” for communities to link existing and potential efforts together to reintegrate and transition veterans and their families into civilian society. This initiative can connect the available resources to the needs – can strengthen our communities and the nation – thereby ensuring the continued success of our all-volunteer force. By not allowing our returning warriors or their families to slip through the cracks in the support structure, we ensure they thrive as contributing members of their community.

The challenge is to move the “American public” from unaware to action. In many cases, the public is unaware of the needs or the means to satisfy those needs. The American public knows who we are, but they do not know us. For them, the need may be simply a matter of education. American business, education, healthcare, and community leaders can be better informed of the needs and innovative examples that produce solutions for veteran reintegration and transition. Within communities, connecting ideas and tasks that will have a meaningful impact requires the following:

- Building public awareness
- Encouraging community involvement

- Promoting community services for returning Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen

Objectives

The following objectives can be attained by communities using a community-based model. These objectives recognize that all opportunities and needs exist on a continuum. Meeting those needs requires leaders to approach solutions in a holistic way.² Only through a holistic approach of education, secure and fulfilling employment; and the ability to access health care, information, options, and services can the “Groundswell of Support” enable our nation’s Service members, their families, and the families of the fallen during their reintegration back into civilian life and lead productive sustainable lives.

- Education--All have access, and are competitive for graduation from universities, colleges, trade schools, and other degree-producing institutions of higher learning.
- Employment--All are competitive, recruited, accommodated, and retained for employment after their transition out of Service.
- Health Care--All have access to health care, information, options, and services.
 - Services--Link national, state, and local community outreach to Service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen regarding quality of life opportunities.

² Nancy Berglass led the efforts behind the *Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund (IADIF)*, a groundbreaking grants program that has distributed nearly \$250 million and strengthened the capacities of nonprofit organizations serving the unmet needs of men, women, and families impacted by deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. She provided expert views describing solutions that must be seen in a continuum and therefore organization must look at assisting veterans and families in a holistic approach.

Introduction

“The only way you can scale this to the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands who are returning home is really through communities and community leadership. So I would hope that they would inspire local leaders to take the lead, work together, figure out what the challenges are locally, and how to try to make that work together.”³

- Admiral Mike Mullen

In the White Paper titled “Sea of Goodwill,” the authors described the reintegration trinity of education, employment, and access to health care that serves to improve the quality of life for Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen. The “Sea of Goodwill” was heavily distributed and overwhelmingly well received, to the point of almost being unanimously accepted as the primer for reintegration reading; however, the main criticism was that the paper did not articulate “how to solve the problem.” While the purpose of this paper is not to tell communities “how to solve the problem,” it does provide thoughts on how best to meet the needs of our returning warriors, families, and families of the fallen by providing the core principles behind successful programs and initiatives nationwide.⁴ In order to channel the “Sea of Goodwill” to sustain the “Groundswell of Support,” and to transition theory from concept into practical application, the desired outcome is not necessarily to prompt communities to replicate these programs in their area or modify their community to fit these programs, rather to apply these core principles as they develop their own individual community plans of action. *Ultimately, the principles discussed in this paper are focused on ideas and tasks that will have a meaningful impact*

³ April 4, 2011 Chairman’s Conversation with the Country at the City Club of Boise; available from <http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?id=1578>; internet; accessed 6 June 2011.

⁴ These concepts and principles are based on visits to nearly 300 geographic communities and meeting directly or indirectly with 20,000 organizations, and meeting with close to 90,000 Service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen in the 15 months.

*on building public awareness, encouraging community involvement, and promoting community services for veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen.*⁵

Goals

The first goal of these initiatives across the country is to build public awareness of the existing issues, needs, challenges, and programs; and to identify the gaps that are currently going unfulfilled in terms of support for veterans and their families. This is done through a variety of means, but generally requires someone with a voice and a platform or the desire and commitment, to initiate action within the community. This individual, or group of individuals, does not necessarily need to be an official leader in the community or of a specific organization. Rather, he or she must have the ability to voice concerns to an audience willing to listen and be inspired to take action. Given that the American people know who those that have served in the military are but do not understand the needs, they do not know how to help. The goal of building public awareness goes beyond simple communication. It must inform to the point of inspiring action, inciting groups to fill the gaps, bringing synergy to disparate efforts, and turning the “Hooah into DO-A.”

Once the community is informed and ready to take action, the next goal is to encourage community involvement. Realizing that each community is unique, involvement can mean many different things, depending on the specific community and its resources and capacity to fill those specific needs. Community can refer to a geographical location, such as a neighborhood, town, city, or even state. It can also refer to a group of organizations, such as a community of colleges, or a type of

⁵ Representations of ideas, efforts, and techniques in this paper are provided by officers working for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2008 - 2011 tasked specifically with solving the problem of achieving improved quality of life for our service men and women, their families, and the families of the fallen. These officers include: COL David W. Sutherland, COL Craig Osborne, COL Christian Macedonia, CAPT Matt Berta, Mr. James Lorraine, Mr. Richard Osial, LTC Tony Forbes, LtCol Dennis Hart, Chaplain (LTC) J. Maddox Woodbery, MAJ John Copeland, MAJ Ed Kennedy, LCDR Kimberly Mitchell, MAJ Ann Curtis, MAJ John Hawkins, and CPT Chris Manglicmot, and CPT Dennis Skelton.

organization, such as a specific business. Community involvement must go further than small gestures. It means more than going over and shoveling someone's front walk in the winter or taking wounded warriors to a ball game and putting them on the jumbo-tron. It is more than just donating money. Instead, it is about making a personal connection to the warrior or the family member. To clarify this point, small gestures are extremely appreciated and nothing in this paper is intended to contradict that or is intended to halt those efforts. Rather, the focus of this paper is on the long-term capacity for greatness of a warrior, a family member, or a family member of the fallen. To achieve that capacity for greatness, it is going to take much more than small gestures. It requires holistic efforts linked to improving quality of life and enabling graduation; recruiting, accommodating, and retaining in meaningful employment; and information and options relative to their wellness.

The last goal is promoting community services. This ranges from encouraging organizations to continue their efforts to ensuring individual awareness of their resources and capacity. There are hundreds of thousands of programs that already exist nationally and within communities, each with their own target audience, objectives, resources available, capacities and desired end states. It is extremely important to recognize that the "Sea of Goodwill" is ever expanding, and the desire to support the warrior and his or her family is a constant. While it is not the intent of this paper to provide an analysis of those programs, it is important for individuals and individual organizations to assess whether the programs in their communities are effective. Collaborating within the community to take advantage of partnerships enables awareness.

Sending troops to combat is a political decision. While not always the case, the American people over the past decade have demonstrated that despite being involved in controversial conflicts; the nation can separate the warrior from the war and recognize the need to ensure both the warrior and their family is well cared for as a result of their personal commitment and service to their country. Understanding that the desire to support our heroes is strong and increasing, the actions of individuals who align with

that desire vary widely. A need remains to support and encourage those individuals and organizations to start programs, or to modify existing programs that include veterans and their families, but also to continue connecting those groups and organizations to the veterans in order increase their effectiveness and continual evaluation for success. It is important to note that if the target of an organization's efforts is not aware of the services being offered, the services will go unused; and the program will essentially be ineffective. It is essential to use a variety of methods to promote these community services to the user, including word of mouth, web portals, and broad, aggressive marketing campaigns; but most importantly, partnering with like minded groups and individuals within the "Groundswell of Support."

This paper intends to stand alone as an outline of core principles to achieve the task of harnessing the "Sea of Goodwill" to sustain the "Groundswell of Support." It does assume an understanding of the concepts outlined in the preface that are based on the "Sea of Goodwill" white paper illustrating the need and the focus. In addition, it may be extremely beneficial to use this paper in conjunction with the Innovative Examples provided by the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Warrior and Family Support Office. The Innovative Examples provide concrete examples of current programs that have demonstrate these principles in action. Those specific programs are in Appendix A.

Keys to Success

The following are a few keys to successful reintegration programs based on the demonstrated success of various organizations nationwide. While not all are applicable or appropriate for all communities, they can prove useful for understanding, accountability, and in application.

Target and Scope

Programs should clearly define their target and scope, both internally for purposes of program development and externally for purposes of demonstrating impact. However, it is important to keep in mind that the overall target group considered in this paper includes not only Service members and veterans, but also their families, and the families of the fallen. Reflecting this, programs are encouraged to be inclusive, not exclusive, in considering their target populations. Merriam-Webster defines *veteran* as either an old Soldier of long service or a former member of the armed forces,⁶ and herein lies some of the problem with using the word *veteran*. Occasionally, an individual who served but did not deploy does not consider him or herself to be a veteran, or an individual from a younger generation that has served may not consider him or herself to be a veteran. Perhaps a more appropriate and relevant definition would be: a person who has served, or is serving, in the armed forces. Families also have unique needs and are a major influence on the needs of those that have served. The families' sacrifice and contribution often affect a Service member's success. Individual programs need to decide their target audience, and it is not the position of this paper to require any organization to include or exclude anyone. Rather it is to ensure that, depending on the nature of the program, all veterans and their families are at least considered. Any model of care must take into account the impact that the family has on the veteran, and that the veteran has on the families. Programs should realize this continuum.

Unique Needs of Females

Initiatives also need to take into account the unique needs of female veterans. Today's conflicts have no front lines. Understanding that women make up 14 percent of the military forces, this results in females often being involved in both indirect and direct combat action despite DoD limitations placed on women serving in direct combat roles. This technical discrepancy occasionally results in female

⁶ Merriam-Webster, "Veteran," available from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/veterans?show=1&t=1306009112>; internet; accessed 6 June 2011.

Service members not receiving the same benefits that their male counterparts receive, especially when it comes to diagnosing and treating post-traumatic stress. While the government attempts to rectify this gap through policy, female warriors are in need of further support. Regardless of government programs or benefits, any program that addresses veterans or Service members must consider the unique needs of our females, including differences of perception of their service, differences in response to traumatic events or issues related to sexual assault. Many females have not, and will not, report assault. At the risk of stereotyping female warriors, a few of those unique needs for some female warriors may include not feeling comfortable discussing their experiences in a room full of their male counterparts. Or, a male Soldier that gets shot in the calf may be upset that it ruined his tattoo, while a female Soldier may wonder if her husband will still find her attractive. Cookie-cutter solutions for veteran challenges simply will not always work on all veterans, and nowhere is this clearer than with our female veteran. Initiatives must be flexible and innovative in their application to allow for improved quality of life for all those that have served.

Partnerships

While the partnering of different community programs, a community-based model, or a public-private model may be challenging at times, the power of such partnerships is undeniable. One challenge often discovered is the inability of some organizations to lower their defenses enough to discuss with another similar organization the various ways in which they are unique, overlapping, or similar. However, when organizations do come together, the discussion is often both enlightening and beneficial for both sides, creating synergistic energies and opportunities to share best practices to fill voids through collaboration. While public-private partnerships can be powerful, and should definitely be pursued for long-term solutions, private partnerships can often be accomplished quicker and be more effective. Over the past decade there has been an amazing amount of money spent on various programs and a

significant amount of goodwill and desire to help; however, there has also been a great amount of duplication of effort, lack of cooperation and missed opportunities. Organizations partnering with similar groups, or organizations focused on the same population but with different goals, can be extremely powerful meeting warrior and family needs from a holistic perspective.

Funding

Having a community-based conduit for resources, with staying power, is a significant part of the solution; and philanthropy clearly drives innovation and action. Groundswell without focus is not effective. In order to figure out the model that will work in the long-run, it is critical for any organization to understand the various sources from which they can receive funding, whether public or private, personal or endowment. Generally speaking, there are three types of organizations: those that are great at what they do, but lack the ability to raise funds; those that are great at fund raising, but lack the expertise to address needs; and those that are both great at what they do and good at raising funds to sustain themselves. It is important for an organization to identify where it lies on that band and then improve upon its weaknesses or seek out organizations with whom they can partner. A model that does not plan for the long term will eventually fail. It is essential for all programs to identify their long-term funding course and method for sustainability because veterans and their families will be reintegrating into society for decades.

Philanthropy can have a significant impact by informing, encouraging, and sustaining non-profits to address the needs of Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen. While financial support is an obvious way that philanthropy can have a positive impact on addressing the needs, there are ways other than financial support that they can assist. Both community and endowment foundations can play an integral role by informing organizations that they support the needs of the military and veteran communities. One foundation has begun a “Did You Know” campaign, where it shares daily

statistics and facts about the needs and challenges veterans face. Foundations can also review the programs they already fund and see where programs that are not including the needs of military members or families could be expanded or adjusted to include those that have served, as well as their families. The community foundation and corporate foundations have been critical leaders and very responsive.

Needs on a Continuum

The overriding premise is that needs and opportunities exist on a continuum; therefore, meeting all needs necessitates a holistic approach addressing education, employment, and access to health care. Addressing one aspect without considering the other two is planning for only partial success. Service members and their families are not typically going to ask for assistance even when needed. When help is offered, one may hear “give it to my buddy in the bed next to me instead.” Military members and their families are taught to make due with what they have, accomplish the mission, and move on. Because of this mentality, military veterans and military families are not accustomed to asking for help, and it often takes an outside force to realize this, and then step in when needed. An example alluded to earlier as a great opportunity missed occurs when professional sports teams bring warriors to a ball game, put them on the jumbo-tron, make everyone feel good about themselves for a few hours, after which everyone goes their own separate directions. While not suggesting this is done maliciously, nor requesting professional sports teams not recognize Service members, veterans, families, or the families of the fallen, this scenario could be a great opportunity to go further and actually connect, and stay connected, to those individuals. Such engagements should develop into internships, mentorship opportunities, offer use of team training facilities, or connecting them to other community services that join people to community resources that can help them thrive.

Big Six

Any organization or individual that is involved, or desires to get involved, in assisting the needs of Service members, veterans, families, or families of the fallen need to ensure whatever they are doing is going to have a positive effect in the long term. No matter what needs they determine exist, what areas they decide to address, and what means they choose to address those needs, their actions need to not cause more harm than good. The following are guidelines that apply to all organizations involved in this effort (see figure 3).

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Big Six: Rules for Supporting Service members, veterans, military families, and families of the fallen⁷</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.Actions and discussions are about THEIR needs, never about what you do.2.Realize that each individual is unique and therefore has unique needs.3.If you think you're doing it better than anyone else or the only one doing it, someone else is doing it and doing it better.4.Never make a commitment you cannot, do not, or will not keep.5.Build for the long run and have a meaningful and personal impact.6.If you start to think it's about you, that's when it's time to get out. |
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Figure 3: The Big Six

Methods to Sustain the “Groundswell of Support”

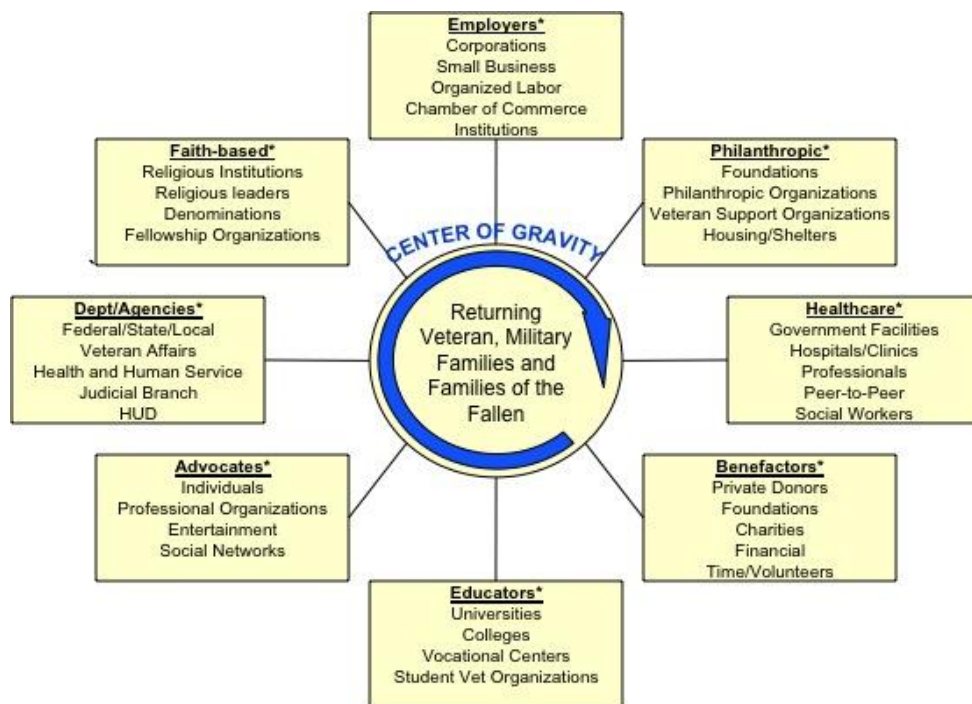
The following sections of the paper outline approaches that communities can sustain the “Groundswell of Support.” The following are not intended to be all-inclusive or necessary for all communities to be successful. They simply include the principles and models of successful innovative examples from across the country and hopefully provoke thoughts and ideas from other communities on ways to address the needs in their community. The intent of this document is not to provide the solution

⁷ Rick Kell of Troops First Foundation shared Rules 4, 5, and 6 to ensure organizations genuinely operate to support Service members, veterans, military families,, and families of the fallen.

for all communities; but rather, a host of ideas to pull from, modify, and adapt for their communities with the end result being Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen achieving their full potential.

Community Action Teams

One successful way to harness the sustainment of the “Groundswell of Support” is through community action teams (CAT).⁸ A CAT is an organization, based on the recognition that there are just some things that government cannot provide, that pulls in the various community services to discuss and assess the needs of veterans,



* Indicates intent, not all-inclusive

Figure 4: Community Action Team

families, and families of the fallen, and then develops a plan to meet those needs. The CAT aligns the myriad of support that will provide a meaningful impact. A CAT requires leadership and focus to identify gaps in resources and reduce duplication, and if effective, to create a synergy of effort while addressing the needs. CATs are already operating in communities across the country and, to varying degrees, are effectively leveraging resources to have honest discussions about the needs of the veteran

⁸ The Community Action Team (CAT) model was created by Jack Lengyel as a way to collate the available support to a community’s reintegrating warriors and families.

and their families. They are not policy directed from a superior organization, but are grassroots, honest, and pure. These CATs do not require much financial support; rather, they just need leadership, encouragement, and involvement. They bring innovation and flexibility because they are partner-centric networks.

Leadership

Critical to the initial success of a community action team is a leader, or a leadership team, stepping forward and taking charge. Initially, a newly established group will be difficult to direct or gain consensus. This is when an individual, or for large groups, a small team of advisors, can come forward and have a significant impact to sustaining the momentum. While all members of the community action team are important and critical to long-term success, it is important to first establish the group so that it has staying power.

Assessment

The group should conduct a thorough assessment of its community, identify available resources, and determine who is not present and who should be represented in the discussion. The assessment should pinpoint gaps that exist between what veterans and families need and what is already available. Sometimes the team will identify that there are already organizations designed to fill certain gaps, but that organization may have a different target audience. This is where the community action team can identify ways to incorporate that existing group in the discussion, modify an organization's mission to fill a gap, or figure out some other way to help meet needs using national, state/regional, and local resources.

Location

It is also important to identify a routine meeting location or locations and set a schedule of when the larger group can come together. Similarly, a long-term goal for the community action team should

be to create a brick and mortar location or identify an organization that already could serve as one, where a veteran or family members can come when they need assistance. An ideal scenario would be when an individual is leaving the military and moving back to community X, he or she knows to go to a specific location where resources would be available or at least easily identifiable. Likewise, veterans already living in community X should know that if they need something, there is a place where they can ask for help. Again, that location will vary by community based on needs, resources available, and how the community decides to solve this challenge. Many communities are black holes for reintegration and transition services. Although disparate services exist, it becomes a scavenger hunt to find them. Many web portals are helpful, but in the end, those that have given so much come home to their families, neighbors, and communities, not web portals or big government programs.

Education

Many veterans are using the Post 9-11 GI Bill, a phenomenal opportunity for them to earn a degree at little to no cost; however, many encounter significant difficulty completing the degree. Studies by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and some leading universities have shown a significantly high rate of attrition within the first year after transitioning from the military. One explanation for this is the difference in experiences between the veteran and his or her classmates. For example, a 22- or 23-year-old veteran may have had one or two combat tours, may have witnessed detonations of Improvised Explosive Devices, been shot at, and even lost some dear friends. Such experiences are a world away, literally and figuratively, from those of a recent high school graduate. Veterans may not be able to relate and establish connections to their classmates. This disconnection may make it significantly more difficult for the veteran student to focus on studying and staying in school. They become bored. That is where two programs in particular, veteran networks and mentor/protégé programs, are having a dramatic impact on student veterans' success.

Student Veteran Networks

Student veteran networks and mentorship/protégé programs are two initiative community-based models that have been extremely successful. Even more powerful than a mentorship program is a protégé program, this is not about the mentor but rather about helping the protégé achieve his or her capacity for greatness. Regardless of how it is titled, the protégé's mentor may or may not have served in the military, but he or she has been where the veteran is now - in school and transitioning to the workforce. Some models have used varying levels of mentors, from a peer to a corporate executive. One model in particular has three levels of mentorship: a peer mentor who focuses on both the daily life of class and student activities; a local leader mentor who is a little removed, more professional, but still readily available to assist; and finally a corporate mentor who has the bigger picture in mind and whose real focus is on easing the transition from student to career.

Nationwide, many student veteran networks are also having significant impact on the success of student veterans. Each has unique characteristics, but generally a student veteran network is an organization that exists to facilitate veterans meeting other veterans, sharing challenges, finding solutions to common problems, and bonding with someone who has been in their shoes, or more importantly, in their boots. The most effective models involve a college or university providing veterans with a physical location where they can meet, leave books after the semester for the next cohort to use, and have fellowship with each other. Student veteran networks often incorporate a tutor system to ensure the veteran understands his or her classes and learns the material. Many networks use this opportunity to share information or organize activities such as community service or social events. This location then also serves as a spot for the community to reach out and assist the student veteran. In other effective models, the school administration has assisted with the development of a protégé program linked to the community ensuring each student veteran has a mentor, and in those cases the veterans are thriving.

Veterans Coordinator

Another successful technique is for a college or university to identify a veterans coordinator who focuses on the veteran from a holistic perspective, not just the veteran interaction with the VA and finances. This coordinator can identify the needs of the veterans and find ways to facilitate a healthy and successful transition. Veteran coordinators can also review college or university policies and see if such policies take the veteran's unique needs into consideration and then recommend changes. Furthermore, they can recommend curriculum changes that include life experience credit for classes or training the veteran accrued while serving on active duty. Another opportunity for the coordinator is to help educators understand the unique needs of the veterans in their classroom. Often the need is just for the professor to ask the right questions of the veteran to get them to open up, or to connect and relate. Using initiatives that make efforts about abilities and not focusing on disabilities requires faculty development, counselor training, and alumni involvement & awareness.

Employment

If veterans do not transition to an educational institution upon leaving the military, they typically enter the workforce and look for a job. When a Service member leaves the military, a service-oriented industry, and transitions to the business world, where the focus is often on the financial bottom line, many have difficulty relating. This is why some companies have started veteran networks within their organizations, through which veterans can come together to discuss ethical leadership in the business community. Discussions also help veterans understand how they can translate their military skills and leadership into the business world. This effort helps connect veterans to the organization and the organization's mission. As a result, veteran attrition is reduced.

Educate the Employer

Part of the challenge, similar to the challenges being encountered at colleges and universities, is that there is a need to educate employers to understand veterans' unique needs and challenges. One of the first things a company should do is an assessment to understand how many veterans are already working for them and who they are. Many companies are shocked by the number of veterans already in, or not in, their organization. One company uses this opportunity to identify veterans, connect with them, and assign them as peer mentors for incoming veterans. Regardless of whether the mentor is a veteran or not, just having that personal connection can be invaluable during the transition period. Even organizations that are veteran friendly can benefit from reflecting on the way they treat this group of workers. Often companies put veteran issues in their diversity section, an organization that already handles issues focused on workers with special needs, gender issues, race issues, sexual orientation, etc. However, what this often fails to account for is veterans fall into those categories, veterans have special needs, veterans are different races, veterans have various sexual orientations, etc. One of the more appropriate models is to ensure this remains a Human Resources mission or a corporate leadership responsibility. These recommendations are not about asking for special privileges, they are about connecting and accommodating so that the veteran or family member will thrive.

Veterans Representation with the Chamber of Commerce

Some Chambers of Commerce have developed an innovative solution by identifying a veterans' coordinator or even started a separate veterans' Chamber of Commerce. In smaller communities, the chamber may appoint a veteran coordinator to identify opportunities for veterans and look for ways to assist veteran-owned businesses. In larger communities, a veterans' Chamber of Commerce dedicated to serving just the needs of veteran-owned businesses may be appropriate. The methods these individual Chambers utilize can vary, but effectively bringing veteran-owned businesses together with non-veteran-

owned businesses to foster commerce and assist in job growth benefits the veteran business, as well as the community as a whole.

Credentialing and Licensing

The military invests quality training to Service members such as life-saving skills or even driving skills to support and win our nations wars. However, as these highly skilled Service members reintegrate into society, they are unable to transfer their skills to be employed on their expertise without being credentialed or licensed again. Veterans must start over and relearn skills that they have mastered while serving, which sets them back to be employed until they complete the credentialing and licensing courses. Organizations, such as organized labor, have taken initiatives to align military skills and assist transitioning veterans to apply their experience back into society quickly. Credentialing and licensing committees must participate in the discussion to ease or allow transferable skills to society. This allows those that have served a step-up to reaching their potential in society.

Peer-to-Peer Health Care

One of the most effective health care models involves peer-to-peer counseling as military members generally can relate to others who understand their experiences and day-to-day challenges. Depending on their specialty while serving in uniform, a Service member is part of a team or squad or some sort of unit where he or she has at least one or two friends with whom he or she can share everything. This bond formed through service, combat, and sacrifice, is like no other. That concept is still applicable, and useful, during transition and reintegration. Programs that encourage the gathering of military members in some forum have extraordinarily positive effects on their mental health and ability to achieve their full potential.

Younger veterans are typically interested in healthy, active lifestyles and as a result, the best peer-to-peer models for them involve events with such a focus. Various models, whether they incorporate rock climbing, mountain biking, or hiking, other activities and recreations draw in the younger veteran. Without realizing it, they are forming bonds with fellow veterans and civilians interested in similar activities, discovering alternatives to drugs, alcohol and other depression-inducing forces, and, in turn, building a solid social support network. The peer-to-peer model works so well because a veteran is more likely to open up to another veteran, one with a shared understanding and shared experiences and not exclusive.

Family Enrichment

The family is the lifeline to the Service member. Although they are not standing on the frontlines, they are deeply involved in the war fighting effort. The family's participation in the reintegration and transition process is critical and essential to ensure improved quality of life for both the veteran and the families, and must be considered in the continuum of the holistic care. Many organizations focus on providing supportive services for the optimal development of children and families. Organizations like this commit to strong partnerships with family and community agencies and organizations to develop and provide programs that achieve the best results for children and families. The deliberate effort to support the children and families are essential to a veteran's reintegration process.

Additional Models for Sustaining the “Groundswell of Support”

While the reintegration trinity of education, employment, and access to health care remains the base model for meeting the needs of veterans and their families and helping them achieve long-term quality of life, there are a few other efforts worth mentioning. The following sections are included to

ensure awareness of the power and impact these types of organizations are having with reintegration. With a better understanding of the following types of programs, other organizations will be able to utilize their resources in a more efficient manner to reach their objectives.

Linking Donors to Needs - Web Portals

Another opportunity is to expand collaboration and information sharing through web portals in a partner-centric approach to reduce costs, competition, and duplication of efforts. The basic fundamental of a web portal is to assist community organizations in helping veterans, Service members, and families to access the wide range of services and resources available to them during transition and community reintegration. Community organizations are encouraged to contribute information and resources to these portals as a way to expand their reach and effectiveness. Characteristics of successful web portals are that they are all encompassing, easy to use, reliable, and free to the user as well as the providing organization.

The ability to access resources at all levels, from local, to state, to nationwide, is critical. A web portal that limits available resources to only those of a local government or certain sector will simply not be as effective as one that includes all available resources and empowers the user to decide which to access. Portals should be simple and quick. A portal that is not simple to use or does not provide reliable information will also be ineffective; it needs to provide accurate information quickly in order to be effective and for the user to continue to use it. A web portal that limits access or requires the organization or user to pay fees significantly reduces effectiveness. For example, it might exclude some organizations because they will spend too much on advertising or administrative costs leaving little for actual assistance.

In addition to ease of use and reliability of site, it is important for web portals to focus on content development. While the pool of available resources is large and ever increasing, web portals must

ensure they are capturing these new sites, but even more importantly, that they are listing the quality sites. Sites need to not only be accurate and current, but they need to focus on capturing the effective organizations that are meeting the needs of our returning warriors. Along the same lines of development for CATs, education programs and veteran employment networks, web portals need to include all of those options and maintain current information to remain relevant.

Guerrilla Marketing Campaign

Community public service announcement (PSA) campaigns drive awareness and influence action, while also encouraging individuals to seek assistance. The impact professional sports teams, celebrities, and major public organizations can have on the community through PSAs is powerful. The opportunity for some organizations to build public awareness of the needs of Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen is limitless. Consider the impact the National Football League and Yoplait yogurt have had for breast cancer awareness. These two organizations have taken a leading role in building public awareness for the need to get screened, and tested to support research, and to contribute to community organizations time and messaging. Professional sports teams, public organizations and private companies can do for veterans, families, and families of the fallen what the NFL and Yoplait have done for breast cancer awareness.

NFL players wear pink throughout October, and discussions in and out of stadiums routinely focus on breast cancer, creating heightened awareness. Similarly, during a different month, professional sports organizations could wear camouflage gloves and shoes, and swing a camouflage bat, or run with a camouflage ball. Coupled with a solid public relations campaign, this could have an equally powerful impact on building public awareness of veterans' needs. Yellow ribbons on cars that read "Support the Troops" are nice, but they could go further by informing the reader of a website, a web portal or an organization where they could learn more about how to help veterans in their community. This

campaign plan could have a significant impact to building public awareness and understanding that this is more than just about money or resources; it's about time and making a connection in order to ensure veterans achieve their full potential.

Veterans Treatment Courts

Veterans and Service members experience life-changing events, some of which may cause them to lose focus, make small mistakes, and get into trouble with the law. The Veterans Treatment Court concept was started in 2008 in Buffalo, New York, to address the unique veteran needs; and the model has been duplicated in 73 other communities in 25 states so far.⁹ There are two keys to the success of a Veterans Treatment Court: the judge and the mentors. A judge should understand the unique issues veterans and Service members face and the specialized treatment that may be needed as a result. The motto of some of the judges' is to avoid the same people, going to the same places, and doing the same things that landed them in the legal situation in which they find themselves. In addition to changing their behavior, ensuring the veteran is enrolled in the VA and connected to the available community resources is critical.

The second key to success is a system comprised of mentors who understand the veteran experience firsthand. Some Veterans Treatment Court mentors have served, others just want to help; but regardless of background, they offer trust, insight, and experience to younger veterans coming through the court system. Veterans Treatment Courts may require funding, but mostly they just require people to give of their time. However, reports of a very low recidivism rate and the cost-benefit analysis of one recuperated veteran alone clearly illustrate their financial success as well. These programs provide an effective model for addressing transgressions and are exceptional examples of the effect one can have when the individual makes, and sustains, contact with a veteran in need.

⁹ National Drug Court "Justice For Vets" available from <http://www.nadcp.org/JusticeForVets>; internet; accessed 6 June 11.

Housing

It is estimated that there are more than 107,000 homeless veterans on the streets every night, and that number does not include the number of veterans who live from couch to couch.¹⁰ We must consider homeless veterans outside of the commonly understood sense of living on the street, under bridges, or in downtown mission. Rather, some are also living in their cars, or “couch surfing,” living temporarily with friends or extended families.¹¹ Although there are organizations that aim to end homelessness, a noble goal, models that simply put a homeless veteran in a house are not sufficient. There is more to the battle against homelessness than just putting a roof over a veteran’s head. Homelessness is often accompanied by some sort of substance abuse of alcohol, illegal drugs or prescription pharmaceuticals. Without treatment, a house only masks the deeper problem. The most successful programs combine drug and alcohol treatment with peer counseling or another program to address potential mental health needs as well. The veteran homelessness problem may be chronic, and without addressing the root cause of the problem, the fix will only be temporary. Community service providers linked to vocational rehabilitation, behavioral health support, education credentialing and licensing are critical to improving access and options to healthcare.

Homelessness Prevention

All Grant and Per Diem (GDP) programs, nearly 500 across the nation, are part of a local health-centered, veteran service, delivery network; and, therefore, are ideally situated to serve as veteran service centers. Modifying existing initiatives to allow these programs the flexibility for a full-time staff to effectively serve the demand for assistance and to provide counseling, referrals, and other assistance to veterans in crisis will benefit long term solutions.

¹⁰ Veterans Affairs, Homeless Veterans; available at <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/index.asp>; internet; accessed 6 June 2011.

¹¹ US VETS, Addressing the Needs of Homeless Veterans of OIF/OEF/OND Conflicts; available at www.usvetsinc.org internet, accessed on 8 Aug 2011.

Communities without a GPD program or Vet Center may consider applying for funding assistance to establish veteran service centers. Using a partner centric approach, the VA Medical Centers within the service area of these organizations could monitor assistance requests, referrals, and outcomes to evaluate the veteran service center's performance.

Organizations with programs that fund these service centers may be more effective if they incorporate the following to ensure a comprehensive and higher impact effort towards homelessness. Based on extensive discussion with leading executives in the homeless prevention sector, these initiatives must consider a wider spectrum of services such as:¹²

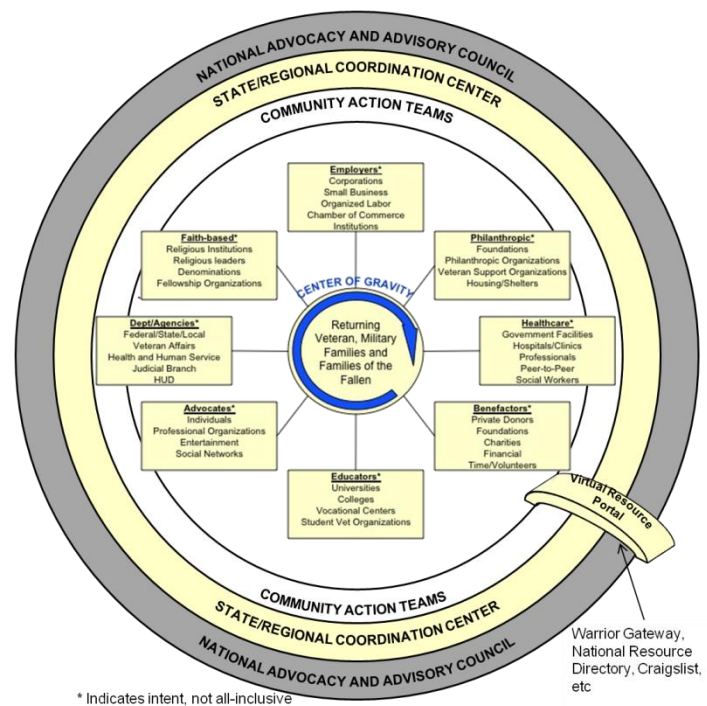
- Provide transportation assistance to critical VA or community health services
- Provide mentors and/or follow-up counseling
- Provide scheduled on-site VA benefits counseling and application assistance
- Participate in local Continuum of Care process as verified veteran service providers
- Increase veteran access to housing through partnerships, effective referrals
- Demonstrate close relationships with DVOP/LVERs and job placement success
- Provide access to financial counseling/credit repair services
- Demonstrate strong partnership with county or other local Veteran Service Officers
- Provide referrals to affordable child care
- Provide referrals to legal assistance

¹² This comprehensive set of services is based on the discussions on September 30, 2011 between top executives in the homelessness sector (John Driscoll of the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans, Steve Peck of US VETS, Jack Downing of Solider On, Phil Landis of Veterans Village of San Diego) and ADM Mullen and selected staff.

The Nation-wide Network of Support for Veterans and Families

The core principles outlined in this paper are based on numerous conversations with leaders, scholars, and experts from the veteran, business, entertainment, financial, sports, education, health care, philanthropy, and faith-based communities. This paper recognizes that it is only through constant interaction and engagements with transitioning Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen that this information can be acquired and synthesized. Clearly, there is a need for organizations to remain connected and advised in which this paper offers the Nation-wide Network of Support for Veterans and their Families Model promoting this positive environment.

This model harnesses the synergy of partnership, networking, and collaboration through a flat organizational environment. With the understanding that there is a “Sea of Goodwill,” the model applies the concept of aligning donors to better serve those who have served US. The goal of the model is to promote grassroots involvement through building public awareness, encouraging community involvement, and promoting



community services. Through these goals and a supportive environment for communities to become more involved, a “Groundswell of Support” emerges, as networks of communities based on partner-centric views will continually develop grassroots solutions throughout the nation. The community-based solutions ultimately avoid the bureaucratic obstacles to support those that have served US.

Three functional layers assist in governing these networks of communities and institutionalize that the center of gravity is the connections at the community level to provide a comprehensive service to our heroes (bottom up approach). First, Community Action Teams are established to meet the needs, connect organizations, and harness resources at all levels. Second, the State/Regional Coordination Center further connects CATs, aligns goals and resources, and advocates their efforts to the national level. Finally, the National Advocacy and Advisory Council facilitates public/private partnership, advocates for both donors and those with needs, advises decision makers and the independent organizations that assist in these efforts. The functions of the model promote grassroots initiatives as each community and heroes are unique on their situation.

Conclusion

There are Service members, veterans, families, and families of the fallen living in all communities across the country, and they need support. Outlined in this paper are just a few of the ways individuals and organizations can have a dramatic impact on the lives of our warriors and their families. Cookie cutter solutions will not meet all the needs of our returning warriors and their families. Nor can government solve all the problems outlined in this paper or be the only ones to provide solutions. Only through a dedicated effort on the behalf of civilian communities across the country will we be successful in reintegrating our warriors and their families. Programs and organizations are having a positive impact when they do one, if not all three, of the following: 1) Build public awareness; 2) Encourage community involvement; and 3) Promote community services for returning veterans, families, and families of the fallen. Working toward these three goals clearly communicates a pledge of appreciation for today's veterans, families and families of the fallen, as well as those of tomorrow, and will have a lasting effect on all achieving their capacity for greatness.

“The willingness with which our young are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.”

- George Washington, 1789