Working Effectively with Veterans

Notes from the Un-Conferencing Session, April 3, 2014

These lists were generated by a large group of participants in an un-conferencing session facilitated by Richard Brzozowski of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension at the 2014 National Training Workshop for AgrAbility. Consider using these lists in developing and implementing an outreach to veterans. Additions to and corrections of the items listed are welcomed. [richard.brzozowski@maine.edu](mailto:richard.brzozowski@maine.edu)

**Checklist for Finding Veterans in Your State -**

* Veteran Centers (Vet Centers) – To find centers in your state see <http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flsh.asp>
* Established Veteran Groups – These might be formal and informal. For a list of veteran organizations in the US, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_veterans%27_organizations#United_States>
* County veteran service officer – County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO), employed by their respective states, are professionals who know their way around the VA system and can assist veterans and their families in a number of ways. see <http://www.longtermcarelink.net/ref_list_state_county_veterans_service_officers.htm>
* Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) – CBOC’s are part of the US Department of Veteran Affairs. A Community Based Outpatient Clinic is a medical facility providing limited services to a given locale.
* Search local newspaper for veteran-related activities
* Job Fairs – Recruit Military is one organization that focuses on job fairs for veterans. See <https://events.recruitmilitary.com/>
* Homeless Shelters & Soup Kitchens – Some veterans may be in need and are using these services in your communities.
* Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) – The mission of the VFW is to foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military, and our communities. To advocate on behalf of all veterans.  <https://www.vfw.org/>
* Active Duty Military Base Offices to find a military installation, see this Department of Defense site <http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/f?p=MI:ENTRY:0> In addition, you might check the Military.com site <http://www.military.com/ResourcesAlmanac/ResourcesKeyIndex/0,14015,35-mil_status_active-1,00.html>
* National Guard - <http://www.nationalguard.com/> You can find out more information for your state through the National Guard Association <http://www.ngaus.org/state-national-guard-information>
* Local Support Groups – These groups could be formal or informal. Here is a link to a directory of veterans service organizations <http://www.va.gov/vso/> , Here is an example of a non-profit that supports vets <http://theveteranssupport.org/>
* State Veterans Affairs Offices <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>
* Disabled Veterans Outreach Coordinator or Specialist – The Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of disabled veterans and other eligible veterans, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans, and veterans with barriers to employment. <http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/106>
* Technical Schools, Community Colleges, Colleges & Universities – Educational institutions are likely to have an office on their campus serving veterans who are current students and graduates.
* Social Media Searches
* Internet Search Engine – Try a search in your state, such as “Alaska Veterans”
* Department of Motor Vehicles – Some veterans have veteran license plates/tags from the Department of Motor Vehicles in their respective state. <http://www.carsdirect.com/dmv/how-to-get-a-veteran-license-plate>
* Family & Friends
* Church Groups
* Schools - public school superintendents and teachers will likely know of active military families or families with parents who are veterans
* Law Enforcement - Many law enforcement officers are veterans. They would likely know other veterans.
* Postal Workers - A good number of postal workers are veterans.
* Employees Groups
* Town Halls or City Halls – Personnel or staff may be aware of veterans in your community.
* Substance Abuse Groups
* Mental Health Community
* Operation Military Kids (OMK) – OMK is a 4H Youth Development outreach of Cooperative Extension in some states. <https://www.operationmilitarykids.org/public/home.aspx>

**Checklist for Reaching Veterans in Your State – Consider using these sites and ways to communicate with or present a message to veterans.**

* Newsletters - However, veteran groups are not likely to have their own newsletter.
* Posters in strategic locations such as on bulletin boards at
  + Federal Offices
  + Temporary Employment Agencies
  + Public Libraries
  + Grocery Stores
  + Café, coffee shops and restaurants owned by veterans
  + Cooperative Extension Offices – Your state land grant institution(s) are likely to have an Extension office in every county.
  + Post Offices
  + Career Centers
  + Medical Facilities
* Yellow Ribbon Events - Your state may have special events for returning veterans. See <http://www.yellowribbon.mil/> or <https://www.jointservicessupport.org/yrrp/Default.aspx>
* USO Centers - United Service Organizations is a civilian, voluntary, nonprofit organization serving the morale needs of U.S. military personnel and their families worldwide. Although congressionally chartered, it is not a [government agency](http://www.answers.com/topic/uso-1) and is supported by individual and corporate donations, United Way, and Combined Federal Campaign. FMI, see <http://www.uso.org/Centers/USO-Centers---United-States.aspx>
* Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR Employment) – See <http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp?utm_source=hootsuite&utm_campaign=hootsuite>
* Other veterans – word of mouth
* Blue Star Mothers (mom’s of active US military) – This group may be interested in your outreach. To find the BSM’s near you, see <http://www.bluestarmothers.org/locate-a-chapter-2>
* Gold Star Mothers (mom’s of military killed in service to the US) - This group may be interested in your outreach to veterans. <http://www.goldstarmoms.com/>
* [www.Vetfriends.com](http://www.Vetfriends.com)
* Social Networking – Facebook/Twitter. It is evident that many veterans are using social networking to communicate with each other.
* Veteran Cemeteries – These cemeteries are likely to have special ceremonies for veterans and their families. The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration maintains 131 national cemeteries in 39 states (and Puerto Rico) as well as 33 soldier's lots and monument sites. <http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/listcem.asp>

**Best Methods for Assisting Veterans**

* Learn the language. – Here is a link to Veteran Affairs glossary. <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/glossary.asp>
* Be direct.
* Follow up/ perform / do your job.
* Develop a checklist.
* ID their goals and needs.
* Include their family in the conversation.
* Learn about what they went through.
* Speak their language.
* Respect their perspective.
* Consult military.
* Be sensitive and be aware of body language.
* Listen to what they have to say.
* Don’t make decisions for them.
* Learn and understand the barriers for veterans (real and perceived).
* Don’t expect them to disclose all the information to you.
* Consider participating or volunteering for their support groups as a way to learn more about the culture and needs.
* Allow time for them to build trust in you.
* Define expectations.
* Consider peer mentoring.
* Educate yourself in special areas such as suicide resources.
* Be honest and realistic with what you can do for them.
* Consider attending a “Boot Camp for Civilians” as a way to learn about military culture.

**Veteran-Related Resources**

* eXtension Military Families <http://www.extension.org/militaryfamilies>
* Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) has chapters in 34 states, veterans service officers in almost all VA medical centers and has a vocational rehabilitation program that operates in approximately 6 regional offices around the country.  [www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org" \t "_blank)
* Veterans’ Pathways <http://www.veteranspathway.org/>
* Pathways for Veterans <http://pathwaysforveterans.org/>
* Wounded Warriors <http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>
* Vocational Rehabilitation Offices
* Military OneSource <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/>
* Road Map for military families
* National Military Family Association <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>
* Road Map to Resilience: A Guide for Military, Trauma Victims and Their Families <http://www.roadmaptoresilience.org/>
* American Legion <http://www.legion.org/>
* VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars)
* Veteran Service Offices <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>
* Army One Source Webinars - <http://www.myarmyonesource.com/default.aspx>
* Veteran Business Network <http://www.veteransbusinessnetwork.com/>
* Rural Initiative Neighborhood Works <http://www.nw.org/network/>
* Farmer Veteran Coalition <http://www.farmvetco.org/>
* National Rural Health Association <http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/>
* Disabled American Veterans (DAV) <http://www.dav.org/>
* VA Outpatient Clinic <http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>
* SCORE <http://www.score.org/>
* Vietnam Veterans of America <http://www.vva.org/>
* Colleges have veteran coordinator
* Senior Centers
* USAA.com – Insurance The **United Services Automobile Association** (**USAA**) is a Texas-based [Fortune 500](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortune_500)[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USAA#cite_note-4) diversified [financial services](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Financial_services) group of companies[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USAA#cite_note-5) including a Texas Department of Insurance regulated[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USAA#cite_note-6) [reciprocal inter-insurance exchange](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reciprocal_inter-insurance_exchange) and subsidiaries offering banking, investing, and insurance to people and families that serve, or served, in the [United States military](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_the_United_States).