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March 2011 Update

Dear Friend of Vets4Vets,

Vets4Vets (V4V) continues to grow and to improve our basic peer support model to help veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan recover from the inevitable stresses of war and fit back into civilian life.

Here's one, of a multitude of examples, of how an Iraq vet trained in one of our workshops has used his knowledge of peer support to pass on what he got from the training; all to help a fellow vet.

John Helfert, a Marine veteran of Iraq, spent two hours listening, without interruption, to a homeless veteran in a restaurant parking lot. John later invited his fellow veteran to visit the local VA hospital. In this instant, John recognized and passed on valuable information pertaining to services that support veterans; in this particular scenario, the VA Hospital would be the veterans' first go-to resource. John, having thorough knowledge of the importance of peer support, learned through listening, that this veteran needed a starting point; a new beginning. Much to his surprise, John bumped into the veteran at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital a few months later—with a clean shave, haircut and clean clothes. In John's own words, "Let me tell you, this made my year." The appearance alone of this brave veteran, spoke volumes of how he felt on the inside.

Our signature program remains our weekend workshops of peer support where veterans can re-establish that camaraderie that they/we miss so much. To date, we have held 74 weekend workshops and trained more than 2000 returning veterans in peer support.

With our current funding, we are able to hold at least one workshop a month in specific locations throughout the U.S. Our new areas for the next six months will be Atlanta and Boston, with a special workshop here in Tucson for student veterans, mostly from Arizona, but others by invitation from around the country to attend for additional knowledge, training, and support.

February 9-13, Vets4Vets held our first training for volunteer Local Project Leaders outside of Tucson. Since there were so many volunteers to bring to Tucson, Vets4Vets sent Abel Moreno, our Deputy Director, and Terri Keovorabout, our Administrative Director, to Chicago for five days to train eight leaders from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana.

March 8-10, Vets4Vets held our fifth workshop for returning women veterans as they had requested. In addition to attending our general workshops, some of the issues women face as

military service members, are sometimes better discussed in these specialized peer support workshops.

Welcome aboard new Vets4Vets staff members!

Rolando C. Valdez is an Army Iraq veteran and is Vets4Vets new Director of Rio Grande Valley, Texas. (Rolando@vets4vets.us)

Andrew “Drew” Thomas is an Army Iraq veteran and is Vets4Vets new Director in the Tyler area of Texas. (Drew@vets4vets.us)

Anthony Dutton is an Air Force Afghanistan veteran and is Vets4Vets new Director in the San Angelo area of Texas. (Anthonyd@vets4vets.us)

Jose Sanchez is a Marine Iraq veteran and is Vets4Vets new Director for Houston, Texas. (Jose@vets4vets.us)

Thanks to the San Antonio Area Foundation, The Dallas Foundation, and the people of Texas who support the Texas Veterans Commission, through proceeds from a state lottery, for supporting their veterans and enabling us to staff Texas. Big Thanks!

Back Home: Good News!

Here in Arizona, we were asked by the Community Partnership of Southern Arizona, or CPSA, to partner with them in providing our peer-to-peer support model to their veteran client base. CPSA is the Regional Behavioral Health Agency for all of Southern Arizona and is funding Vets4Vets to make this happen!

More Good News! Johnny Elvis Fajardo, accompanied by two Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) Officers/Vets4Vets participants, met with the state director of the Arizona Department of Corrections who agreed to greatly expand the program Johnny has developed with their Corrections Officers over the last couple of years, training a coordinator to provide peer support at every prison complex in the state!

This program has become a nationally recognized model for bringing peer support for returning veterans to employers all over the country.

Sincerely,

Jim Driscoll

Vietnam Veteran

Founder, Executive Director