



**CITY OF MONROVIA
LIBRARY BOARD
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services
Library Division

MEETING DATE: April 25, 2019

PREPARED BY: Mabel Cross,
Adult Services Librarian/ Veterans Coordinator

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-1

TITLE: 2019 Veterans Resource Center Update

OBJECTIVE: To update the Library Board on the status of the Veterans Resource Center

BACKGROUND: *Veterans Connect @ the Library* is a federally funded program from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by the California State Library. The Monrovia Public Library is one of 60 libraries in California with a dedicated Veterans Resource Center. In partnership with the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), the Veterans Resource Center helps service members and their families learn about state and federal education, employment, housing, health, disability, and other benefits that may be available through their military service. Providing information to reintegrate veterans into the local workforce and our communities in order to provide veterans the quality of life of other Americans, is a special focus. The goals for this project are to:

1. Provide veteran benefits and local service information to veterans and their family members, and links to other organizations serving veterans, especially local County Veteran Service Offices, CalVet, and the Federal Veterans Affairs Office (VA).
2. Increase registered veterans in the CalVet Reintegration System.
3. Increase California veteran benefit claims.
4. Connect veterans and their families to library resources.

In order to meet these goals, the Veterans Resource Center is staffed by CalVet-trained volunteers who provide assistance to veterans, links to local veterans resources, and access to technology, books and other library materials.

ANALYSIS: The Veterans Resource Center office is located inside the library and operates during regular business hours. CalVet-trained volunteers are stationed in the library lobby throughout the day for visibility and convenience, and have established a connection with the larger community. Along with a staff member, there are seven (7) trained men and women volunteers, some of whom are veterans, who provide resources, assist with programs, and participate in outreach to the community. In addition, a local Veterans Affairs (VA) Outreach Specialist is an on-site bi-weekly to assist veterans and their families. Staff also partners and networks with local qualified Veterans Service Officers and veteran's related organizations.

The *Veterans Connect @ the Library* program is currently in its third year of operation. The first two years of the program were granted funding and included attending training and workshops; recruiting and training volunteers; purchasing materials for the veteran's collection; establishing a presence in the community by providing programs; and reporting statistical data. Currently, program requirements include

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ongoing training and workshops for volunteers and staff, and collecting statistical data. Since the ending of grant funding, programming and materials are now generously supported by the Friends of the Monrovia Public Library.

In our third year of operation, we continue to broaden our outreach efforts and strengthen our support to local service members and their families. We have expanded our services to include an online component, VetNow, which allows veterans to access resources from the privacy of their own home. VetNow offers live veteran benefit navigators, live job coaching, a resume lab, job tools, and college skills resources.

Staff recruited one additional volunteer this past year and continues to meet monthly with all volunteers to provide support, networking opportunities, and updates on current resources. This year, CalVet added newly updated training modules for staff and volunteers. In addition, staff and volunteers will provide a survey for veterans' experiences at the library to assess program effectiveness. Lastly, we are increasing efforts to have a trained CalVet representative at the Veterans Resource Center each month to connect veterans with their benefits onsite.

Staff increased efforts to connect with women veterans, whose needs are different than their male counterparts. This year staff increased online resources to women veterans, including *Women in Military Service for America Memorial*; *California Women Veterans Leadership Council*; *Service Women's Action Network*; and *Women's Social Justice Network*. Staff also helped connect local women veterans with larger support groups such as the *Women's Veterans Alliance*, which hosts an annual conference for women service members. The library regularly partners with the local chapter of the American Legion Women's Auxiliary to collect donations for hospitalized veterans.

Programs for veterans include *The Veterans History Project*, which is an ongoing effort to record service members' stories of military service, filmed in partnership with local KGEM studios. This year, staff submitted two interviews, both women veterans, to the Library of Congress for the *Veterans History Project*. Additionally, *Paint n' Sip*, an evening for family and friends of veterans to embrace their creative side at a local business in Old Town Monrovia. These programs and others like them are sponsored by the Friends of the Monrovia Public Library.

Outreach and public events have included area service organizations like the American Legion and Women's Auxiliary. Staff and volunteers have participated in the Memorial Day and Veteran's Day Ceremonies, the Foothill Unity Health Fair, and Monrovia's Friday Night Street Fair. The library has partnered with Foothill Workforce Development, Assemblymember Chris Holden, Senator Anthony Portantino, Congresswoman Judy Chu, and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano in highlighting and supporting veterans' resources in the San Gabriel Valley.

Veteran Connections

- ◆ 1,920 veterans and their family members served
- ◆ 1,022 sessions of VetNow online resources for veterans
- ◆ 2 programs for veterans

Volunteers

- ◆ 7 CalVet trained Benefit Coaches
- ◆ 760 volunteer service hours
- ◆ \$18,764.40 = estimated value of volunteer hours

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Library Board move to receive and file AR-1 2019 Veterans Resource Center Update.

LIBRARY BOARD ACTION REQUIRED: If the Library Board concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion: *Receive and file report AR-1 2019 Veterans Resource Center Update.*

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