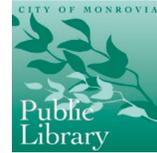




**CITY OF MONROVIA
LIBRARY BOARD
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services
Library Division

MEETING DATE: July 28, 2022

PREPARED BY: Mabel Cross, Adult Services
Librarian

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-2

TITLE: 2021-2022 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 over 63 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 in to 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 supported by a staff member and six *CalVet*-trained volunteers from the local community, some of whom have been volunteering with the program for years. Staff schedule appointments and provide access to resources, technology, books and other library materials. Programming and materials are generously supported by the *Friends of the Monrovia Public Library*.

UPDATE: Currently in its sixth year of operation, the *Veterans Connect @ the Library* program continues to broaden outreach efforts and strengthen support to local service members and their families by partnering with veteran's service providers, organizations, agencies, elected officials and local groups serving veterans. Staff meets & works with veterans, veteran's providers, agencies and organizations. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused veterans providers, agencies and organizations to reevaluate and reset how services, resources and information are shared with veterans. The Veterans Resource Center staff and volunteers continue to follow the City & County Covid -19 guidelines.

On August 23, 2021, the *County of Los Angeles Military Veterans Services Officer (CVSO)*, resumed weekly onsite visits at the Veterans Resource Center. Hayden Velasquez is on-site at the Veterans Resource Center two days each week, a one-day increase from the pre-pandemic schedule. Hayden provides in-

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person assistance to veterans and their families in preparing and submitting claims and in representing claimants before federal, state and local agencies on Mondays 10 am–4 pm & Thursdays 12pm–4 pm.

In July 2021, staff began a new partnership with the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN), which connects County departments, non-profits, the VA and other programs. VPAN is the first-ever community-driven support network serving veterans and their families in the U.S. VPAN connects non-profits and the VA and helps veterans navigate complicated systems so that they can receive the services they deserve. A part of the Los Angeles County Mental Health Department, VPAN is led by veterans for veterans, and provides mental health; substance misuse support; housing; workforce development and employment; legal services; and food, transportation and childcare assistance. In addition, they provide veterans with opportunities to connect with other veterans in social and recreational settings. Staff welcomed VPAN representatives, Rhaniel Miel and Brock Milhorn, who are on-site at the Veterans Resource Center on Tuesdays from 10am–5pm.

In order to create partnerships and learn about additional resources for veterans, staff regularly attended virtual workshops, meetings, and trainings. Staff met monthly with the *Los Angeles Veteran Collaborative* which is a network of private and government agencies working to improve the lives of veterans, service members and military families in Los Angeles County. Staff networked with the *California Department of Veterans Affairs, Minority and Underrepresented Veterans Division (MUVD)*. Staff also met with *Unite California*, a coordinated care network of over 370 health and social service providers. These organizations provide valuable information and resources that staff are able to share with veterans and their families when accessing the Veterans Resource Center. They also keep staff abreast of regional events and support organizations for veterans such as the non-profit, JVS SoCal, which focuses on job skills for veterans. Staff successfully partnered with JVS SoCal on several career skills workshops in the winter and spring.

In addition, staff continues to connect women veterans with larger support groups such as the *Women's Veterans Alliance*, to support their unique needs. The VRC regularly partners with the local chapter of the *American Legion Women's Auxiliary*, most recently for their Poppy Donation Drive in May 2022 that raises funds for rehabilitating injured veterans, as well as the annual Socks Campaign, that collects donations of games, creative supplies, and socks for veterans. Staff continued partnerships with Assemblymember Chris Holden, Senator Anthony Portantino, Congresswoman Judy Chu, and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano in providing veterans' resources in the San Gabriel Valley. On April 1, 2022 staff presented the Military Service & Stewardship Award to Commander Floyd Henderson of VFW# 2070 at the Monrovia Chamber Awards Dinner & Installation. The Veterans Resource Center received the award in 2019.

Staff promoted virtual and in-person networking opportunities, local veterans events, trainings, workshops, and updates on current resources to both veterans and VRC volunteers. Several of the VRC volunteers have not returned to in-person volunteering due to the pandemic, health issues, school and job commitments, while one volunteer relocated out of state. This impacted the number of volunteer hours they were able to provide this year, with a total of 15 volunteer hours for FY21/22. Staff continue to work with the current VRC volunteers to find ways for them to contribute to the program while respecting their personal, health, and scheduling needs. One VRC volunteer returned on-site in June 2022 and another has also expressed interest in returning in the near future. Staff maintain regular contact with the volunteers, to provide them the support they need as they work hard for our community's veterans. Meetings with local agencies as well as outreach events, such as the MAP Neighborhood Conference, provide staff the opportunity to promote the program while also recruiting potential future volunteers.

Staff continues to promote VetNow, an online platform which allows veterans to access resources and offers live veteran benefit navigators, live job coaching, a resume lab, job tools, and college skills resources. In addition, staff also promotes the new library databases provided by the California State Library for lifelong learning and workforce development, including: Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and SkillShare.

Although the pandemic brought about many changes, the VRC adapted and provided support, outreach, and programming to veterans and their family members. Below are the total numbers of veterans and their family members served by the Veterans Resource Center in FY21/22:

Veteran Connections

- 1,189 veterans and their family members served
 - VRC - 510
 - CVSO - 499
 - VPAN -180
- 362 VetNow Online sessions

Staff also provided programming, built partnerships with organizations serving veterans, and promoted the project at national conferences and via the local news. Below is a list highlighting all that was accomplished this past service year:

Outreach & Programming

- These Hands Virtual Program in partnership with StoryCenter, July 10, 2021
- Texas A&M University Libraries and Veterans National Forum Presenter, Sept. 13-14, 2021
- ABC Eyewitness News Salute segment promoting the Veterans Resource Center, Oct. 2021
- Soledier Socks Company donated 500 pairs of socks to the VRC for the 2022 Annual American Legion Women's Auxiliary's Annual Socks Campaign
- JVS SoCal Virtual Job Workshop Series:
 - Learn Virtual Job Search Skills, January 13, 2022
 - Virtual Interviewing, February 3 2022
 - Virtual Soft Skills, March 9, 2022
 - Virtual Job Hunting in the "New Normal", April 7 2022
- 12th Annual Monrovia Area Partnership (MAP) Neighborhood Conference, April 30, 2022
- Memorial Day 2022 Poppy Donation Drive supporting rehabilitation for injured veterans sponsored by American Legion Women's Auxiliary Unit #830
- 3rd Annual Foothill Unity Health and Resource Fair, Saturday, May 21, 2022
- Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger 24th Annual Tribute to Veterans & Military Families at Arcadia County Park, May 28, 2022
- Live Oak Memorial Park Memorial Day Tribute, May 30, 2022

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Library Board move to receive and file AR-2 2021-2022 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-2 2021-2022 Veterans Resource Center Update.

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