

VIRGINIA WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Commonwealth of Virginia

2012 Year In Review



We Are Virginia Veterans

www.WeAreVirginiaVeterans.org

**OUR COMMUNITY,
OUR STRENGTH.**

Martha Johnson Mead, Special Projects Coordinator
Kadetra Cooper, Marketing, Public Relations and Outreach Specialist
Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Virginia Department of Veterans Services

1/31/2013



Since the inception of the Virginia Wounded Warrior program we have released an Annual Progress Report to capture the amazing work that is being accomplished throughout the Commonwealth for our military service members, veterans and their families.

In four short years as a program we have gone from ground zero into one that is providing comprehensive services and connections for those we serve throughout every region of the Commonwealth. A cornerstone of our success has been the public/private partnerships that we've formed with our federal, state and community partners. We have built upon the premise that our 'Community is our Strength.' Consequently, service provision is occurring in the communities where our veterans reside through regional teams of outstanding individuals committed to lives of service.

Program success would not be possible without the support of our Governor and General Assembly that has provided us with the necessary legislation and funding. Our Virginia Board of Veterans Services, Joint Leadership Council and Veterans Services Foundation continue to support our efforts and serve as advocates for this Program. You will read about many of our partners in this report yet there are many unsung heroes that enable us to achieve our mission. We are grateful for everyone's support whether it comes in the form of time, service provision, donation, volunteerism or any other form of goodwill. I hope you enjoy reading this outstanding report that was compiled by Martha Mead and Kadetra Cooper. While no document captures all of the work accomplished, this report provides the reader with some of the highlights that occurred in 2012. It is my hope that this next year will afford us even more opportunities to make a positive impact on those that have served, or who continue to serve, this great nation.

With gratitude and respect,
Catherine A. Wilson, Executive Director

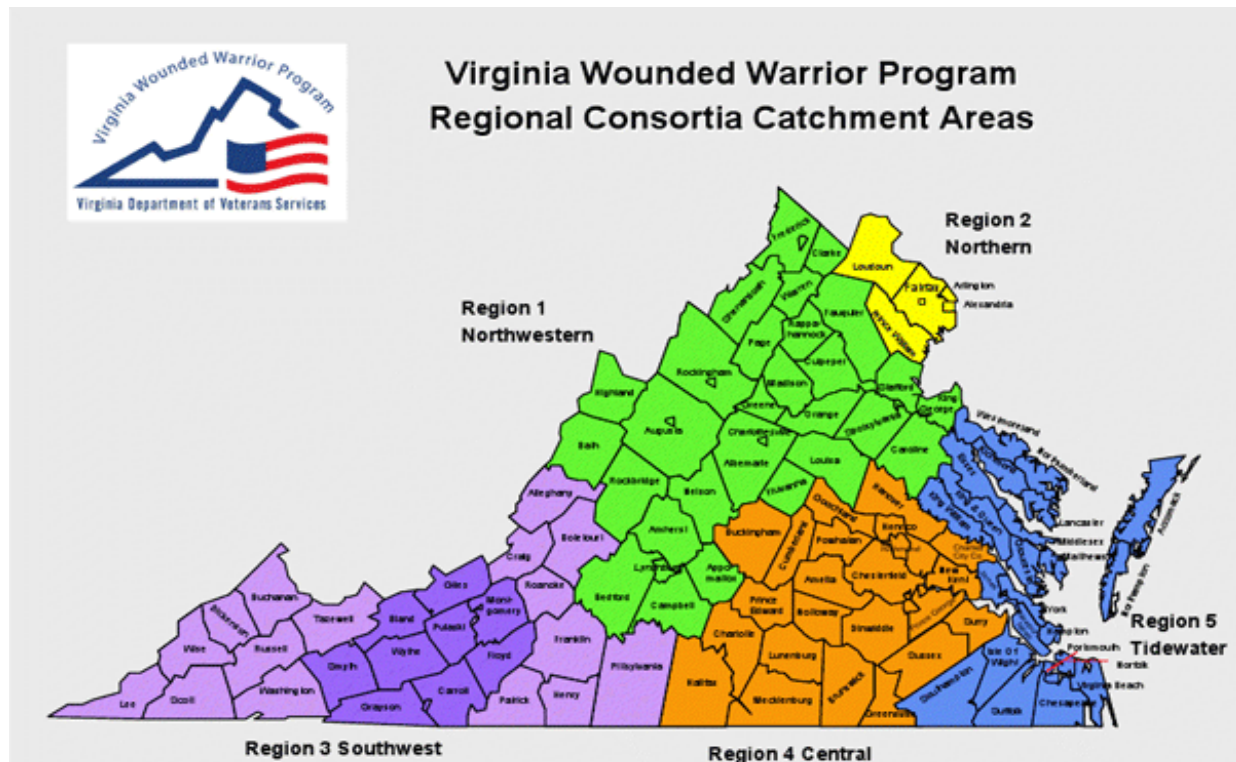


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Broadened Vision and Emphasis on Military Children and Families	4
Future Development Led by Strategic Planning and Policy Initiatives.....	6
The Data Demonstrates Success	6
Expansion through Regional Services and Outreach	10
Training	26
Housing First	29
Outreach	30
Advancing.....	32



VWWP ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT January 2012-December 2012

Introduction

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program concludes its fourth year of operation with unequaled success in providing life-affirming services to Virginia veterans and their families. This year VWWP staff across the Commonwealth provided services to over 5000 veterans and family members, increasing the number of individuals served by over 220 % since the program began. The strength of this program is the dedicated staff members who go above and beyond the call of duty on a daily basis. Garnering the good will and resources of the communities in which they live and work, VWWP Regional Directors, Coordinators, Peer and Family Support Specialists, Resource Specialists, Reentry Specialists, Clinicians, Navigators, VISTAs and administrative staff are opening doors for members of the military and veterans community, assisting with connections to high quality healthcare, behavioral healthcare, rehabilitation and support for basic needs. Gratitude is expressed by service members, veterans, families, caregivers and others every day for the extraordinary services and dedication of VWWP throughout Virginia.

Broadened Vision and Emphasis on Military Children and Families

In 2012, the VWWP Executive Team revisited its original vision and mission statement. The Team conducted a thoughtful review of the compelling needs of service members, veterans and families, existing operations, gaps in services, similarities across regions, and the need for standardization or standard operating procedures. The group discussed what the desired state of the program would be in 10 years and worked to ensure that the VWWP Strategic Plan reflects the desire to move toward a high-quality, performance based treatment and referral network that enjoys an excellent reputation among both the military and civilian communities in Virginia. Recognizing that the program is becoming well known across the Commonwealth and the country for timely, appropriate and supportive services to military service members, veterans and families, the Team determined that it was time to broaden the vision statement to reflect the future.

VWWP is becoming known for not only its ability to connect military service members, veterans and families to treatment and support for behavioral healthcare, but a trusted connection to primary healthcare services, financial assistance, employment, housing and other community support. In addition, the program has provided numerous opportunities for professional training in military culture, evidence-based practices for treatment of combat related stress disorders, healthcare issues, marital and family support, and for addressing the needs of military service members and veterans involved in the criminal



justice services system. After significant deliberations and discussions with VWWP staff and partners, the team adopted the following vision to guide the future delivery of services and advocacy for Virginia's veterans and families.

Vision

"Enhancing the quality of life for Virginia's veterans, service members and their families."

This simple yet powerful statement is intended to provide guidance for the continued success and expansion of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, ensuring that the on-going focus is always Virginia's service members, veterans and families who have sacrificed their personal safety and needs to ensure freedom and liberty for all.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Policy Academy 2012

Since 2008 the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has been offering resources and information to the states on addressing the needs of military service members, veterans and families affected by deployment stress and behavioral health issues. In 2008, Virginia attended the national conference, "*Paving the Road Home*." Each year since, SAMHSA has hosted 10 states to participate in a Policy Academy where technical assistance and federal resources are provided to assist states to develop infrastructure and approaches for addressing the community support needs of this population. Virginia participated in the 2011 and 2012 academies, sending a team of professionals in 2012 from VWWP as well as partner state agencies.



Virginia's SAMHSA Policy Team

The focus of the team's work was on expanding the current program to include services and outreach for military families, including children. One very positive outcome of the academy was confirmation of the fact that Virginia is far ahead of many states in the services that have already been developed for veterans and family members through VWWP. Many of the current practices, such as Mission Healthy Relationships and Mission

Healthy Families, weekend retreats for couples and families to begin healing relationship issues, were discussed as potential models for other states.



As a result of the Policy Academy, Virginia came home with a plan to involve other state agencies, such as the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, Virginia Department of Social Services, the Comprehensive Services Act Administration, the Virginia Department of Education and their local counterparts in outreach to families, children and schools. Through technical assistance resources, SAMHSA has also facilitated connections with the non-profit Military Child Education Coalition that will prove fruitful for expansion in 2013.

Future Development Led by Strategic Planning and Policy Initiatives

In 2012 the Interagency Executive Strategy Committee (IESC) supported the mission and outreach of VWWP through interagency projects and initiatives, including suicide prevention and family resiliency, development of VWWP's online data management system, support of the National Guard and Reserves, employment initiatives, the AmeriCorps and VISTA grants, and the rural health outreach funded by the Flex Veterans Rural Health Access Program Grant. All of these initiatives are covered in this report. The invaluable resources of the agencies and organizations included on the Interagency Executive Strategy Committee are the life blood of VWWP. The VWWP team benefits from the strength, resources and relationships of the member agencies and organizations and from the strong leadership and commitment of the agency heads.

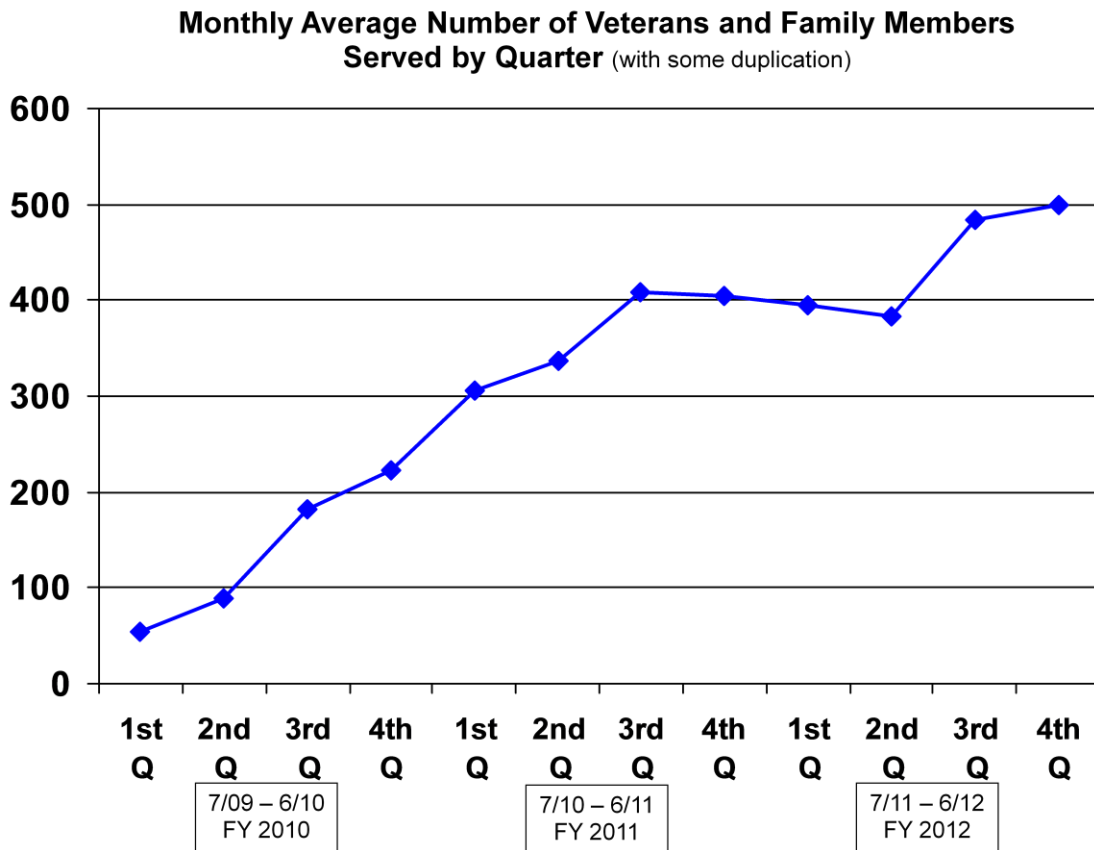
In 2013, VWWP plans to continue and strengthen the work of the IESC. The VWWP Advisory Committee will be augmented by representatives of the member agencies and organizations with emphasis on supporting the goals and objectives of the VWWP as set out in the Strategic Plan. The membership of the Advisory Committee includes agency officials who supported VWWP at the SAMHSA Policy Academy.

The Data Demonstrates Success

In FY 2012 VWWP increased by 220% the number of veterans and family members served (from 1650 to 5283) since it first started serving veterans and families in Virginia's communities three short years ago. The direct services provided by VWWP were funded by \$1.3 million in state grants to five regional consortia providing services for veterans with military stress related conditions and traumatic brain injuries as well as to their families. Grant funds have augmented the array of services provided. In addition, VWWP has promoted the judicious use of "other people's money." VWWP staff link veterans and their families to the best resources to address their specific and individual needs including providing links to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and to local and community partners.



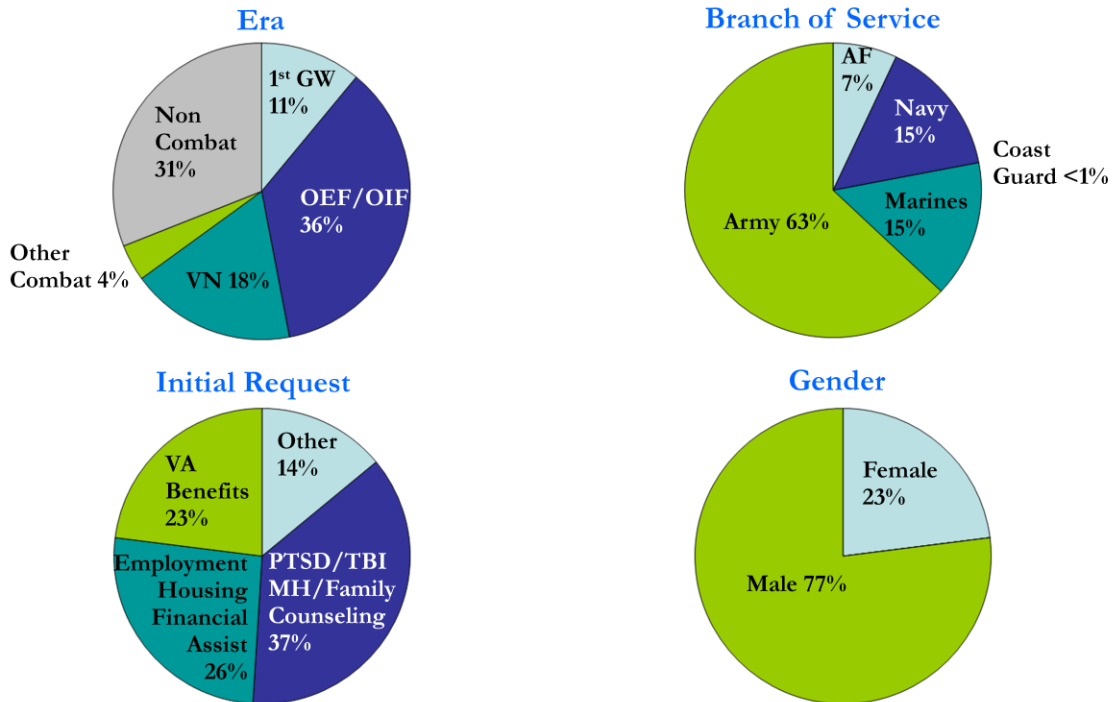
The following chart shows how the average monthly numbers of veterans and service members served by VWWP have increased exponentially over the past 3 state fiscal years, July 1, 2009-June 30, 2012.



The charts that follow illustrate the demographics of the veterans who are served by VWWP, including era of service, branch of service and the gender of those served. The chart entitled “Initial Request” shows the reason that veterans or their family members initially contacted VWWP for assistance. In many instances, VWWP is contacted with a first call or visit such as the need for financial assistance. After working with the veteran and his or her family it is often revealed that the problems are much more extensive and involve the need for assistance with benefits, healthcare, behavioral healthcare, housing or a variety of other essential needs.



**Characteristics of Active Duty Members, National Guardsmen,
Reservists or Veterans Served by VWWP**
(Data from June 2011)



Since 2009, the Community Services Boards (CSBs) have been tracking the numbers of veterans and family members that they serve regardless of whether the person is a client of VWWP. The numbers shown in the following chart reflect those persons with a military background or an immediate family member who is provided mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services by the CSBs. VWWP believes that these numbers may be lower than the actual because of the fact that many people, particularly women and service members who served but did not retire, do not identify themselves as veterans. Family members of veterans or military service members, including family of National Guard and Reserves, may also not self-identify as having connections to military service.



Active Duty Members, National Guardsmen, Reservists, Veterans or Their Family Members Served by Community Services Boards

(CCS3 Data provided by VDBHDS)

	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Active Duty Members, National Guardsmen, Reservists or Veterans Served	3096	4050	4442
Family Members Served	540	928	931
Total	3636	4978	5373

Data for Decision Making and Performance Management

In July, 2012, VWWP launched its online data management system. The on-line automated system is the result of 18 months of outstanding work by the Institute for Policy and Governance at Virginia Tech. VWWP now has an automated system to collect, report and analyze statewide data. This provides VWWP with an enhanced ability to perform long range planning, to determine the needs of our Commonwealth's veterans and their families, and to adjust the VWWP service delivery model as needed. This system also provides additional tools to VWWP managers to monitor service delivery, outreach and community education at a regional level. In addition, the system provides an automated case management capability to those regional providers who previously maintained paper records.

In 2013, VWWP plans to harness the data to generate reports for executive decision making and to measure the performance of the program.



Expansion through Regional Services and Outreach

Region 1

Region I of the Virginia Wounded Warrior program serves nearly 126,000 veterans and their families in Northwestern Virginia in a geographical area covering 12,504 square miles, spreading from King George County in the east to Winchester in the northwest, and Bedford County to the south. The region encompasses the major cities of Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Winchester, Lynchburg and Lexington and covers 28 counties. Camilla Schwoebel, Regional Director and former U.S. Coast Guard Weapons Officer and Deck Watch Officer, provides VWWP leadership for the Region 1 team.

Rappahannock Area Community Services Board serves as the fiscal agent and hires the Regional Coordinator. Veteran Peer Specialists work out of 4 of the Community Services Boards. In addition to the Rappahannock Area, Region 1's partner CSBs are:

- Central Virginia CSB – Now Known as Horizon Behavioral
- Harrisonburg-Rockingham CSB
- Northwestern CSB
- Rappahannock Rapidan CSB
- Region Ten CSB
- Rockbridge CSB
- Valley CSB

One hallmark of the Region 1 staff is that all of the staff are veterans, with the majority being combat veterans. The one exception is the Family Support Specialist who is the

spouse of a combat veteran. The staff boasts veterans from all branches of the service.

Additionally, four staff members continue to serve in the Virginia National Guard, and Reserve components. Karen Collins, Regional Coordinator, was hired in November 2012. She is a veteran of the US Army (Active and Reserve components) and served two tours in Iraq.



Karen Collins, Jimmy Brinkley and Camilla Schwoebel accept a \$4,000 contribution From Steve Heitmeyer, King George American Legion, Post 89



Veteran Peer Specialists

The five veteran peer specialists who work in Region I provide intensive one-on-one care coordination to any veteran in need of support. They work with veterans to connect them to needed resources. They also facilitate support groups, participate in training private and public partners on issues affecting veterans, and participate in veterans events, such as the VA Homeless Stand downs, Job Fairs, and Student Veteran events. The Veteran Peer Specialists currently facilitate eight support groups, called either Combat Support Groups or VetLinks, throughout the region.

Family Services Focus

Suzanna Erlichman, the Family Support Specialist, was hired by Region 1 in December 2012 to replace Tammy Harper. The hire of Suzanna continues the strong focus and expansion of services to families in the region. Suzanna will continue the support of families through marketing the use of the Kognito *Family of Heroes* online simulation program reviewed later in this report. She will also continue the highly successful Kids on the Block Deployment Puppet Shows for military children who have had a deployed parent, as well as training of staff and collaboration with Operation Military Kids and Camp Corral Summer Camp programs. She provides critical staff support for Girls State, a program of the American Legion for high school seniors, many of whom are military children.

Suzanna plans to grow the family program by reinvigorating the Family Support Group in Fredericksburg, and starting groups for family members in Charlottesville, and other parts of the region. She will continue to reach out to families of Reserve and National Guard members, continuing and increasing contact with the two Family Assistance Centers in the region, and the Family Readiness Group leaders at the Virginia National Guard armories throughout the region. She will also reach out to all of the domestic violence treatment centers and shelters to inform them of the services offered by VWWP.

Suzanna and the Veteran Peer Specialists will also reach out on a more comprehensive basis, to the local Departments of Social Services, to close the loop on service members, veterans, and families who may receive assistance or benefits.

Criminal Justice and Reentry

Region 1 continues to be involved with the law enforcement community, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and reentry. The region continues to participate in all of the CIT Programs and is a part of the local curriculum on an ongoing basis. Ben Shaw, Region 1 Veteran Peer Specialist is a certified CIT trainer. Jimmy Brinkley, previously a part-time Veteran Peer Specialist, was hired full time beginning in July 2012, with half of his time focused on Reentry. He has initiated contact with all of the prisons and regional jails in the region, and has begun working with veterans within 3 months of discharge,



ensuring connections to their benefits and community support. Region 1 staff also participates in Cross Systems Mapping (XSM) throughout the region. XSM is a locality driven process sponsored by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. The process brings together criminal justice and mental health professionals, as well as consumers, in a community. Together the group identifies the process that an individual with serious mental illness follows when he or she becomes involved in the criminal justice system. Working with trained facilitators, the group identifies gaps and resources and develops an action plan for working together to address them.

Transportation

Region 1 continues to address transportation barriers within the region by involvement with the Virginia Department of Public Rails and Transportation regional commission meetings, Salem VAMC DAV, and local VSOs providing transportation. Region I has helped some of these transportation providers gain volunteers to help expand their services.



Pictures from left to right: Former Deputy Commissioner Bill Janis with Region 1 team at Veterans Resource Fair; Mahlon Johnson and Jimmy Brinkley at an outreach event at Germanna Community College; and Veterans Check out the VWWP booth at the 2012 Virginia State Fair.

Region 2

The Region 2 team serves veterans and their families, as well as members of the Guard and Reserve, in the four counties and five cities located in the densely populated area of Northern Virginia. Approximately 192,000 veterans reside in these jurisdictions. The area contains numerous major military facilities including the Pentagon, Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Fort Belvoir and Marine Corps Base Quantico. Nearby facilities include Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the National Intrepid Center of Excellence and Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. Jim Thur, Regional Director who is also the retired Executive Director of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board and a retired Navy Captain, leads this team.

Clinical Model

This region provides a clinically based model of treatment focusing on engaging veterans and family members in direct services for mental health, and alcohol and drug treatment,



as well as brain injury treatment and support. A particular strength of the Region 2 team members is their ability to provide both individual and group treatment for veterans with substance use disorders. There is a critical need for this type of treatment because of the growing incidence of alcohol abuse and addiction to pain medications among veterans returning from deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. Region 2 also provides family counseling to veterans and their families coping with marriage and family issues, relationship issues, family communications and crises, issues of domestic violence, children's behavioral health issues and other results of combat and deployment stress. Ongoing therapy is provided to an average active monthly caseload of 55 veterans and their families. Region 2 has also worked collaboratively with other VWWP regions to offer Peer Retreats and Couples Workshops that help veterans understand the stressors of military life and how to cope with the negative impact of war, trauma and multiple deployments.

The Northern Virginia region is home to many well established non-profit health and human service agencies that actively support veterans and their families. Key partners are the five CSBs led by the Loudoun County CSB which administers the VWWP clinical and support service team. Brain Injury Services, Inc. also provides essential support services to veterans with traumatic brain injury.

Partnerships with Northern Virginia Community College

The relationship with the Northern Virginia Community College system, which consists of six campuses, has been further strengthened during the past year. Of particular interest is the inclusion of VWWP Regional staff in an on-campus discussion of suicide called "Don't Change the Subject." These sessions, which were held at all of the campuses, included a showing of a documentary film and a panel discussion. VWWP staff continues to expand their presence on the Northern Virginia Community College campuses by conducting support groups and clinical treatment sessions for student veterans.

Assisting Homeless Veterans and Families

Significant emphasis has been placed on addressing the needs of veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. VWWP representatives participate in local and regional planning activities of the VA and the Continuum of Care organizations. A close working relationship has been established with Volunteers of America Chesapeake which recently was awarded a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grant by the US Department of Veterans Affairs for the Northern Virginia area. Through this grant, a wide range of supportive services will be made available to veterans and their families who are at risk of becoming homeless. People Inc. also received a SSVF grant in collaboration with the Appalachian Regional Coalition on Homelessness to serve southwestern Virginia. River City Comprehensive Counseling



Services, based in Richmond, received a Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program grant from the US Department of Labor.

Each year, the Region 2 team actively supports the Stand Down for homeless veterans at the VA Medical Center in DC. The VA Medical Center in DC also initiated a new model program for homeless veterans called the Community Resource and Referral Center. This program operates 24/7 to provide immediate access to VA services and referral to other community based services including VWWP.



Mark Taylor, Regional Coordinator, Jim Thur, Regional Director, and David Galloway, Veteran Peer Specialist at Winterhaven Stand Down

Virginia Values Veterans

Because of the high unemployment rate among younger veterans and especially members of the Guard and Reserves, all VWWP Regions, including Region 2, have actively supported the new Virginia Values Veterans Initiative of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services as well as other local employment projects sponsored by the Chambers of Commerce. In order to assist individual veterans, the Region 2 team has also further enhanced partnerships with the local Work Force Investment Boards, One Stop Centers and numerous major corporations involved in the Operation IMPACT Network of Champions sponsored by Northrop Grumman Corporation. Support has also been provided to members of the armed forces transitioning to civilian life through Yellow Ribbon events, job fairs and the Transition GPS programs at the military bases.

Community Education and Outreach

Community education has been a focus of Region 2 activities since its inception. The regional team continues to provide clinical training for behavioral health and brain injury services professionals in the area. Educational sessions on PTSD and TBI and related topics are offered periodically to local police and sheriff departments as well as the Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy. During the past year, in concert with VWWP's Criminal Justice Partners Training, six training sessions on the effects of PTSD and TBI on veterans were conducted for staff of the local criminal justice system. Participants included magistrates, attorneys and staff of probation and parole agencies throughout Northern Virginia.

Real Services to Real People

To illustrate the breadth of services provided by the regional teams, VWWP asked staff to submit some compelling case examples for this report. Two cases submitted by Region



2 recount the kinds of activities that occur every day across the state in support of Virginia's veterans and families.

(1) A VWWP Region 2 clinician has recently started meeting with a student veteran who was referred by the counseling office of a local university. On multiple occasions, the student veteran failed the last two courses he needed to obtain his degree. He has been struggling with attention problems and excessive stress related to his military service and reintegration back into his family and social circles. He was diagnosed with PTSD and Major Depression and has begun regular treatment sessions with the VWWP clinician. More importantly, this veteran has been referred for neuro-psychological testing through Brain Injury Services to determine the extent of possible head trauma or other organic injury to his brain. VWWP is confident that with continued assessment and focused treatment this student-veteran will be able to successfully complete his chosen degree and eventually obtain a satisfying and appropriate job.

(2) A VWWP clinician has been providing case management and mental health services to a veteran for about a year. One focus was on obtaining VA compensation for injuries sustained while on active duty. While these injuries are from his decade's old military service, this veteran was very reluctant to make a claim for compensation. He did not feel worthy of receiving a disability rating since he was not injured during a war or while on deployment. Through the consistent support of his VWWP clinician, he obtained a clearer picture that his quality of life was poor and not likely to improve. He was finally able to accept the idea of receiving the help he deserved from the VA. Just recently, this veteran learned that he would be receiving a VA disability rating of 100%. The veteran was very emotional when sharing the news with his clinician and was extremely grateful for the assistance he received.

Region 3

Region 3 of the Virginia Wounded Warrior program serves nearly 101,000 veterans in Southwest Virginia. Veterans and their families living in this region are geographically spread along the Interstate 81 Corridor from Roanoke to Bristol and outlying areas from Covington down to Danville and as far west as Big Stone Gap.

State Funding Augmented by a Federal Grant

In 2010, Virginia competed for and was awarded a \$300,000 per year, three year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). Montana and Alaska also received the *Flex Rural Veterans Health Access Program Grant*. The grant allowed Region 3 to expand from a service territory of 9 counties and 2 cities by adding services in an additional 13 counties and 5 cities, virtually blanketing all of Southwestern Virginia. With a combination of VWWP grant funds and federal funds, a Regional Coordinator and seven new Resource Specialists were hired. The two original Resource Specialist positions were maintained.



In 2012, Leanna Craig became the new Regional Coordinator after formerly serving as the Resource Specialist at New River Valley Community Services. Leanna is married to an Iraq war veteran who has served two tours of duty. As a military spouse, she brings

her own expertise and experience to the program.



Matt Wade and Leanna Craig with riders from the Patriot Guard after the Town of Blacksburg's Welcome Home Parade

Matt Wade, Regional Director and former Manager of Program Accountability with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), leads Region 3. Under Matt's leadership the regional team shares a common vision through a detailed work plan designed to best serve Southwest Virginia's service members, veterans and families. The following major elements of the work plan include the progress made in each arena over the past year.

Services Expanded to Veterans and Their Family Members in the Roanoke Valley

In 2012 Region 3 welcomed Blue Ridge Behavioral Health (BRBH) to the Regional Consortia. Blue Ridge's catchment area includes over 25,000 veterans that had previously been unserved by VWWP. In addition to BRBH, Region 3 solidified its relationship with the Salem Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC). VWWP and the VAMC routinely refer veterans to their respective services; coordinate their care; and partner on outreach and training events. Events such as the Blue Ridge Veterans Celebration have led to partnerships with veterans' services organizations such as the Military Family Support Center and the Roanoke Veterans Council. Partnerships have also been formed with media outlets such as WSLC Channel 10 and private sector organizations such as Advanced Auto, Kroger, and Member One Federal Credit Union.

Addressing the Impact of Substance Abuse

An estimated one in six people misuse prescription drugs within Region 3. In the 2010 Report, *Assessing the Experiences, Supportive Services Needs and Service Gaps of Veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia*, the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance reported that Southwest Virginia has the highest rates of substance abuse in the state as well as the most barriers to treatment. In 2012 Region 3 staff actively participated in regional Substance Abuse Coalitions and regularly attended the Appalachian Substance Abuse Coalition and One Care meetings. Region 3 staff have also participated in trainings on designer drugs and the Facing Addiction Through Community Empowerment and Intervention Team (FACE-IT).



Addressing Transportation Barriers

Transportation was identified as a critical service need in focus groups conducted by Virginia Tech for the 2010 VWWP Needs Assessment cited earlier. In 2012 Region 3 staff formed relationships with various transportation providers including the Disabled American Veterans at Salem VAMC and Mobility Management Grant Awardees through the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. While transportation remains a service need, these relationships have helped create a great pool of resources for Region 3 veterans and family members.



Leanna Craig, Matt Wade and Veteran Resource Specialist Terri Heron at an Event sponsored by the New River Valley Jeep Club and Shelor Motor Mile

Strategies and Practices that Engage Veterans and their Family Members

In 2012 Region 3 launched the “Are You a Veteran” Campaign with Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). The campaign encourages LDSS front line workers from both Benefits and Child Welfare to ask during intake if their clients have ever served in the military. The campaign has increased referrals from LDSS to VWWP across the region. A family engagement expert is assisting Region 3’s Veteran Resource Specialists who are military spouses to develop a family engagement plan for Southwest Virginia.

Expanding the Use of Telehealth

Carryover funds from the first year of the HRSA grant have been used to launch a Telehealth initiative in Region 3. To date, Alleghany Highlands, Mount Rogers, Planning District One, and Piedmont Community Services have received funding to purchase Telehealth equipment and to contract with Telepsychiatry providers. Partnerships are being formed with Mountain Home VAMC in Tennessee and Salem VAMC as well as with private providers. The expansion will continue into 2013 as Region 3 utilizes technology to overcome barriers associated with transportation.

Performance by the Numbers

Through the coordinated work of the Region 3 team the numbers of veterans being served in Southwest Virginia are at an all time high. In October of 2012 Region 3 served 97 new clients, an increase of 234% over the numbers seen in December, 2011. Numbers of direct services have also increased from 37 in December of 2011 to 112 in October of 2012, a 203% increase.



Region 4

In 2012, Martha Utley, Regional Director and retired U.S. Coast Guard Master Chief, led the region to utilize a comprehensive and jointly developed work plan to focus its efforts in the following areas:

- Developing a Regional Framework
- Developing Geographical Mapping and Team Assignments and establishing Roles & Responsibilities
- Establishing and Developing Veteran and Family Support Programs
- Reinforcing relationships with Community Services Boards.

Through these efforts the region was reorganized into a divided regional structure with team assignments. The Region 4 team was augmented with 2 part time Peer Support Specialists and a Family Resource Specialist. The additional staff resources increased the numbers of veterans and family members served by the regional team by 105% (from 365 in CY11 to 750 in CY12) and extended the region's "footprint" throughout the 22 counties and 5 cities which make up the geographical boundary of Region 4. Region 4's team, comprising a seasoned coordinator, 2 case managers and the relatively new peer and family resource specialists tout the following major accomplishments in the past year:

Case Management

The team served 750 new and continuing cases involving veterans and family members seeking counseling and mental health support services. Other vital services included helping the veterans and families to obtain stable housing and income within their local communities.

Mission Healthy Relationships (MHR)



Ed McIntosh, Regional Coordinator, facilitating MHR Workgroup

Region 4 hosted two couples' workshops in 2012. Ed McIntosh, Regional Coordinator, co-facilitated these workshops and helped lead 27 veteran couples through an 11 hour curriculum that teaches and reinforces relationship skills building. MHR is a relationship enhancement program, focused on effective communication skills for couples.



The program is crafted for the military experience, emphasizing *both* communication skills and health issues of veterans and spouses who are coping with the effects of stress-related conditions including PTSD and TBI.

Mission Healthy Families (MHF)

In addition to the couples workshops, the Region 4 team led by Brandi Jancaitis, Lead Case Manager, coordinated and hosted two weekend family retreats (in Palmyra and Goochland), with a total of 21 families attending (102 individuals). MHF utilizes a 10 hour curriculum that teaches and reinforces resiliency skills for military families who have experienced, or who expect to experience, deployment of a veteran. This event brings together various partner organizations with a common mission to serve and support veteran families. The adult curriculum focuses on strategies for enhancing personal and family resilience and is delivered by Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Rehabilitative Counseling. The youth and family activities focus on resilience skills-building, such as positive communication, coping with change, and healthy stress management. The workshops are delivered by Project Youth Extension Services from North Carolina State University and the Virginia Joint Family Support Assistance Program.

Often families are coping with barriers to communication and conflict resolution due to strain put on their families from combat deployments and associated invisible wounds, frequent moves and/or absence of the veteran from family life. They find the weekend rural retreat to be an opportunity for reconnection.



Pictures from left: Families around MHF Bonfire; Sophia Reed, Family Resource Specialist and Emily Brown, VCU MSW Intern, working with children during the May 2012 Retreat

Peer Support Groups

Region 4 established two new support groups for veterans and their family members, one in Richmond and the other in Prince George County. The primary purpose of the veterans and family member support groups is to provide social support and positive reinforcement that are essential for recovery from service connected trauma or any other threat to health and wellness, as any of these can affect the veteran and the veteran's



significant others. The number one priority is to provide a safe, supportive, and empathic environment where veterans and family members can share their thoughts and feelings about common experiences and learn or reinforce coping skills. With the permission of group members, the group facilitator may invite guest speakers to present on topics of interest that are recovery focused. The groups meet semi-monthly, with an



Kerri Gerke, Peer Specialist and Peer Group Facilitator, at Family Retreat, Goochland

average of 6 participants per group. The Prince George group is facilitated by Kerri Gerke, Peer Support Specialist. It is a combined veteran and family group with separate breakout sessions for the veteran and family members. Prince George Christian Church has always had a desire to be a "Beacon of Light" in the community. Kerri chose to connect with this church due to the safe location, willingness to assist the community, and the number of Fort Lee soldiers and

veterans who attend the church services. The church ensures tables are set up and enough chairs available. They coordinate their calendar with the support group meetings, checking in with Kerri to verify dates and times of meetings before scheduling events for the fellowship hall on Tuesdays.

Region 4 has been fortunate to have a VCU intern working with the peer support groups over the past few months. The groups have also been observed, with the focus on the facilitator, by another VCU student. The feedback has been positive and constructive. This group has really formed into a network of support and a shining example of comradeship experienced within the military setting. Even the family members have mentioned feeling more at ease discussing the issues with other family members from a military background, with similar experiences.

Services to Homeless Veterans

Region 4 provided exceptional housing and homeless services to veterans and families. Their services are focused on helping veterans obtain basic needs, such as food, clothing, emergency shelter/safety, and identifying documents. After basic needs are met, VWWP works with the veteran to overcome barriers to long-term sustainable housing. Critical referrals and linkages are made to employment or to disability income, suitable and affordable housing, and to mental health and substance abuse treatment resources. Homeless services delivery often requires intensive case management and the ability to go to the veteran, even if that is in a camp site by the river. In 2012, Region 4 was able to sustainably house more than 18 homeless veterans. With permission from two distinguished veterans, Region 4 submitted the following case examples of how its team



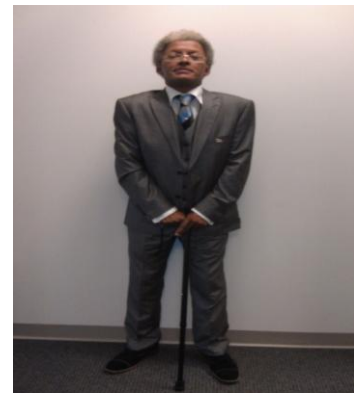
helped overcome barriers to housing and supportive community services.

Mr. Willie Overton faced many challenges to finding permanent supportive housing; however, by working with VWWP he recently received the key to his new place in Richmond. Willie is a Vietnam Combat Veteran who for the past 20 or more years was homeless, living in the outdoor elements, in and out of unstable housing situations, or in jail before he connected with VWWP.



Brandi Jancaitis, Case Manager, Willie Overton, and Kevin Birdsell, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Social Worker, McGuire VAMC, outside Willie's new home

“L.C.” a Vietnam veteran who was formerly homeless celebrated 1 year living in his own apartment in November 2012. When he was first contacted by VWWP in March of 2011 he was living on the banks of the James River, with neither income nor access to needed medical and mental health services. Now he is linked to services at McGuire VA Medical Center and enjoys his permanent housing and monthly VA benefits.



L.C.

Employment

Region 4 partnered with CARITAS to assist veterans in recovery from mental illness and substance use with reentry into the workforce. CARITAS is a Richmond-area collaborative network of persons living out a fundamental desire to do good for one another. Congregations, volunteers, businesses, funders, service providers, and agency staff all work together to nurture persons who are in critical need of help. Through this partnership, Region 4 sponsored a total of 10 veterans through completion of an intensive 5-week, 8-hour a day life and job skills training and job placement program for motivated clients coming out of The Healing Place, a homeless shelter and long term addiction recovery program. Region 4 also regularly partners with the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) at River City Comprehensive Counseling in Richmond to provide intensive employment case management for homeless or unstably housed veterans.



Region 5

Region 5 is home to one of the highest concentrations of military service members, veterans and their families in the nation. The area also hosts a significant number of U.S. military bases. Greater Hampton Roads comprises communities that benefit from military families and that also recognize the enormous strain caused by duty and deployment. The model in Region 5 focuses on the military community and rural outreach because its borders extend from James City County and Newport News across Hampton Roads into major cities, including Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Chesapeake and Virginia Beach. The area also encompasses much rural terrain including Southampton and Isle of Wight Counties, as well as Virginia's Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula and the Eastern Shore.



Regional Director, Eric Endries, leading VVC Training

2012 was a very exciting and challenging time for Region 5's staff, led by retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Eric Endries. Sadly, the region lost an incredible Virginia Veterans Corps (VVC) Program Director, Christina Lipin, because of the relocation of her family. Christina shepherded the fledgling VVC AmeriCorps program from initial concept to execution. She led the program development, creating an amazing corps of military-related Navigators who work in a variety

of veterans' services organizations assisting military service members, veterans and families and educating them on the services provided by VWWP.

In late 2012, Philisa Johnson was hired to replace Christina. Philisa brings a tremendous amount of experience and passion for service that is second to none. She has hit the ground running in continuing the service outreach of VVC and supporting the Navigators.

Region 5's new staff and existing staff efforts span a variety of areas to best serve Virginia's Southeast military service members, veterans and families. The following highlights only a few of the major accomplishments across the region.

AmeriCorps grant: Virginia Veterans Corps

To engage the diverse population of military service members, veterans and their families, Region 5 and its VWWP partners applied for and received funding for an AmeriCorps grant from the National Corporation for Community Service through formula funding allocated to Virginia. The 3 year grant provides funding for the Virginia Veterans Corps which engages 22 part-time AmeriCorps service members. Members work in various veterans and military service organizations performing a job that helps



military service members, veterans and families. Simultaneously, they inform the people that they contact about the VWWP and its services and make direct referrals to the VWWP staff.

The pilot service year (Sep 2011 – Aug 2012) of VVC was successful in reaching all of its grant goals. Direct services were provided to 8,346 individuals from the military community (veterans, family members, reservists, etc.). The VVC Navigators were able to identify 1,866 of these as veterans; 72 referrals were made to Resource Specialists in Region 5; and 93 referrals were made outside of the region. Additionally, 2 Veterans were successfully enrolled in the VA healthcare system.



Virginia Veterans Corps Members having fun at the AmeriCorps Launch in Hampton Roads

The Navigators come from all walks of life. Six Navigators engaged in the pilot year were veterans themselves, having served in combat situations from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. Twelve of the Navigators were family members of veterans or active duty service members. Their ages ranged from 21-65, 8 were college students and 8 held other outside jobs. While performing their AmeriCorps service, the Navigators were assigned to six different organizations throughout Greater Hampton Roads. These were the Armed Services YMCA, Community Services Boards in Hampton-

Newport News, Eastern Shore and Middle Peninsula-Northern Neck, Operation Homefront in Newport News, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, the Virginia Employment Commission Norfolk Office, and the Volunteer Center of the Virginia Peninsula.

The Virginia Veterans Corps also provides a wide array of training to the AmeriCorps service members. During the initial service year, members were trained in an interactive program of the National Alliance for Mental Illness called, *In Our Own Voices*. This helps with the understanding of the journey of mental illness by recording stories of individuals who have struggled with mental illness and recovery. Other trainings included learning about working with children and families of combat veterans and service members. Suicide Prevention training was offered as well as resume building and team- building.



Executive Director Catherine Wilson with Virginia Veterans Corps and VISTAs during a day-long training



The AmeriCorps program emphasizes a rich service year for the members. VWWP was able to enhance that experience with orientation and training on military culture and on the array of services and supports available from VWWP and its statewide partners.



Rodney Walker, VVC Navigator, receiving award from Mark Fero, Vice Chairman of the Virginia Services Foundation

The second service year was launched this fall with the addition of two more part-time “Navigators”. One outstanding VVC Navigator, Rodney Walker, received the Robert E. Wone Award for Exemplary Service from the Virginia Service Foundation. Rodney developed and implemented a reliable transportation system for transporting veterans to medical treatment and increasing attendance at workshops on employment and veterans’ benefits.

Partnerships with the Department of Defense

The Region 5 Director, Coordinator, Resource Specialists, and VVC Navigators spend a great deal of time working with the local military bases to provide information and resources to transitioning military service members as well as providing valuable community support on the bases. One example is Regions 5’s involvement in the Navy’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is a four-day workshop for pre-retirement or pre-separation military members. The region’s involvement in TAP allows staff to reach out to those individuals who plan to remain in Virginia ensuring timely access to VWWP services. Region 5 also partners with local military installations by participating in training with the active force. This training includes partnerships with the Langley Air Force Legal Department, US Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command, Fort Eustis Warrior Transition Unit, and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story. The partnerships are designed to provide the audience an understanding of how VWWP can assist their clients, increase knowledge on veterans’ benefits, and assist with specific veterans’ issues.

Region 5 continues to build a direct relationship with the Richmond and Tidewater Market Poly-trauma Working Group and Tidewater Multi-service Market Medical Management Working Group. Involvement in these working groups ensures that VWWP is integrated through a collaborative process and is considered a partner for developing a consolidated Business Plan for the Multi-Market. These include integrated plans for appointing services, resource sharing, optimization initiatives and DoD/VA sharing opportunities.



Reentry

The Region 5 Reentry Initiative was created as a result of Governor McDonnell's Executive Order 11 (2010)-The Virginia Prisoner and Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Council. Efforts in Region 5 address directly the Governor's four main Reentry goals: 1) make recommendations to strengthen the prisoner reentry program in Virginia; 2) increase public safety within communities; 3) reduce the risk of recidivism; and 4) decrease incarceration expenses for state and local government and taxpayers.

Mackenzie Abridello, Region 5's Reentry Specialist, is charged with building a Reentry Program for veterans incarcerated in state prisons and local jails within Region 5. She has immediately impacted the area by creating a model for reentry services for veterans and sharing her experience and findings with the VWWP staff on a statewide basis.

Based on the Governor's Initiative VWWP's regional reentry model includes:

- 1) Attend and participate in active local Reentry Councils
- 2) Visit city, regional, and state facilities within Region 5 every three months
- 3) Brief veterans within 12 months of release on VWWP services
- 4) Conduct one-on-one assessments with veterans to be released within 3 months
- 5) Partnering with VA to conduct assessments
- 6) Linking with Resource Specialists to coordinate services one month prior to release
- 7) Relaying resources to incarcerated veterans prior to release
- 8) Transferring cases to Resource Specialists on the day of the veteran's release from prison or jail.

Preventing Veterans and their Families from Homelessness

Region 5 is proud of its efforts to prevent homelessness among veterans and their families. Despite not having dedicated staff assigned to assist homeless veterans, the team goes above and beyond to help these individuals and their families. Two case examples illustrate their work.

(1) The team helped a veteran and his family who were threatened with eviction from their home due to insufficient funds to pay back rent and current rent. To address the immediate issue of avoiding eviction and becoming homeless, Region 5 was able to decrease the amount the family owed by working with home owner, creating a dispersed payment plan, and leading a coordinated effort of payment. The Resource Specialist working on this case came up with a methodology of combining funding from Commonwealth Catholic Charities, DAV, Autumns, Inc., and Virginia Veterans Services Foundation funds. Region 5 also worked with the family to create an action plan to avoid a similar situation in the future. The plan included money management, employment for the spouse, a HUD/VASH voucher application, and follow up with several agencies. The Resource Specialist's efforts resulted in the veteran being granted a 100% disability rating and the disabled son being granted SSDI.



(2) Region 5 assisted the wife of a medically retired veteran whose husband abandoned her and their 2 children, ages 2 and 11. At the time of initial contact with VWWP, the spouse and two children were living in a hotel, did not have any money, no place to go, and were one night away from becoming homeless. Region 5 contacted the hotel management and made arrangements to pay for 7 nights stay. This allowed the Region 5 team time to assist the family. The team worked with a local Redevelopment and Housing Authority Case Manager. Within days the veteran's spouse was given keys to an apartment. Region 5 also coordinated with several agencies which donated a living room suit, kitchen table and chairs, and beds for the children. Through these positive efforts and life skills counseling, the spouse has since gained employment and is supporting her family.

Training

In FY 12, VWWP continued its very productive relationship with the Partnership for People with Disabilities (PPD) at Virginia Commonwealth University to provide training to service providers and others about addressing the needs of veterans and their families. The training is a component of an overall training program for VWWP, entitled "Common Ground: Linking Wounded Warriors and Community Support Providers." It is funded by a generous grant from the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative (CNI).

Motivational Interviewing

In the spring of 2012, four workshops were conducted in convenient locations across the state designed to expose VWWP staff and DVS Benefits Services staff to the technique of Motivational Interviewing. Christopher Wagner, Ph.D., licensed clinical psychologist, certified Motivational Interviewing trainer, and Associate Professor, Rehabilitation Counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University provided the training.

The training included an introduction to motivational interviewing (MI). MI is an interviewing and counseling technique that focuses on leading the person toward positive change by emphasizing his or her strengths and core values. The MI portions of the training focused mostly on the essence and spirit of MI, particularly the elements of fundamental respect for the veterans being served, focusing effort on discovering, affirming and building upon veterans' strengths rather than identifying and addressing problems, eliciting veterans' perspectives and hopes more than providing information and suggestions, and focusing veterans' attention toward possibilities and away from frustrations and defensiveness. Each session included a video example and some opportunity for brainstorming ways to use MI elements in work with veterans, with some of the sessions integrating some aspects of direct practice among participants.

The training deepened the understanding and collaborative relationships among VWWP staff and DVS Benefits Services staff with the goal of providing clear referrals among



staff for veterans and families that seek services from the two service lines. The benefit for veterans and families is to provide a smooth transition from one program to the other so that their needs can be met without having to struggle between two different systems of services.

Behavioral Health Certification Program and VWWP Training Portal

The last few months of FY 12 found VWWP and the Partnership for People with Disabilities (PPD) working together to develop ways to sustain the training effort that has been funded for the past 3 years. Grant funding runs out at the end of FY 12 (June 30, 2013) and additional solicitations have not yet been released by the CNI.

To continue the momentum that has been built by this excellent training program, VWWP and PPD have built a web portal in concert with the VWWP's website, www.WeAreVirginiaVeterans.org. The portal provides the opportunity for service providers and others to link to trainings about the VWWP such as orientation training and community presentations. In addition, links are available to on-line trainings of national accrediting and certifying organizations, such as the Defense Centers of Excellence and the Center for Deployment Psychology at the U.S. Department of Defense.

At the end of 2012, VWWP and PPD began exploring new ways to provide training to community providers who work with the VWWP in supporting veterans, their families, and members of the National Guard and Reserves. Given the challenges of budgets, travel, and time constraints, online training is an avenue that presents opportunities for quality, efficiency, convenience, and uniformity. VWWP and PPD piloted an online training entitled, *Serving Our Veterans Behavioral Health Certificate*. This program was developed through the collaborative effort of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, the U.S. Department of Defense Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP), and Essential Learning LLC.

The 20-hour online curriculum is based on the latest evidence and clinical practice guidelines developed by the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs for treating conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, addictions, and depression.

Each course threads real-life cases with applicable knowledge and skills to provide civilian providers with awareness and clinical knowledge for meeting the needs of local military members, veterans and their families. Participants are provided a certificate and contact hours which can be submitted to their accrediting or certifying bodies for continuing education credits. The goal of the pilot is to determine the feasibility of providing this on-line curriculum to providers across the Commonwealth at no or reduced cost. The online system allows VWWP to collect contact information for providers who complete the course and to utilize that information for partnerships and referral sources at the local levels.



Criminal Justice Partners Training

In FY 2012, funded by a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance via the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, VWWP provided training across the Commonwealth designed to enhance the working knowledge and skills for addressing the behavioral health impacts of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on military service members and their families. The training targeted attorneys, community corrections staff, magistrates, special justices, judges and other professionals in criminal justice professions. Regional Directors, Coordinators, Peer Specialists, Resource Specialists and the Reentry Specialist for Region 5 provided over 30 sessions that reached more than 550 participants. Evaluations of the training were very positive and led to additional requests for training by Police Departments, the Virginia Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole offices and others. In FY 13, VWWP plans to offer a “train- the- trainer” session for Crisis Intervention Teams to assist local police officers in handling crises in their communities involving veterans. Crisis Intervention Officers are law enforcement officers who have received special training in working with persons with serious mental illness who get involved in the criminal justice system. Once trained, the officers will go back to their communities to train their colleagues in police departments across the state.

Kognito Family of Heroes

Kognito Family of Heroes is a unique program sponsored by VWWP and the Virginia Department of Health. It is an on-line computer simulation program that fosters resiliency and an understanding of PTSD among families of veterans. Through a series of animated discussions family members learn how identify the signs and symptoms of post deployment stress. They are taught to manage conversations with veterans and to deescalate arguments and negative behavior. Family members learn how to motivate the veteran to seek treatment if needed and are given information on resources, including how to connect with local VWWP staff.

ASIST

VWWP has enjoyed a strong relationship with the Virginia Departments of Health and Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in an effort to prevent suicides among service members and veterans. In 2012, the agencies sponsored the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) Train the Trainer Sessions for 24 professionals working in the Community Services Boards and in VWWP. Two of the certified trainers, Ben Shaw and Brandi Jancaitis, are VWWP staff. Ben and Brandi have subsequently trained all VWWP staff in the skills and techniques. They are sharing their services with Virginia National Guard staff who work in the family assistance centers and with service members, veterans and families. Although the results of these training might not be apparent in numbers because we can never know the numbers of tragedies averted, the impact has been tremendous. The skills imparted have proven invaluable for VWWP



staff who work with struggling veterans and families.

ASIST is the most widely used suicide prevention training in the world. It is a two-day intensive, interactive and practice-dominated course designed to help caregivers recognize and review risk, and intervene to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. The learning process is based on adult learning principles and involves highly participatory workgroups. Graduated skills development is achieved through mini-lectures, facilitated discussions, group simulations, and role plays.

Regional Trainings and Outreach

The trainings recounted above are the major training initiatives of VWWP in FY 12, however, the VWWP Executive Team, Regional Directors and Coordinators, and VWWP staff are working across the Commonwealth and in their communities every day to expand the awareness of the services offered by VWWP and the availability of connections for veterans and their families to healthcare, behavioral healthcare, benefits, financial assistance, employment and community support. This expanded awareness is evidenced by the increase in referrals and services provided in each fiscal year since the inception of the program.

Housing First

As noted earlier in the regional accomplishments, VWWP has emphasized the importance of helping veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness find permanent, sustainable housing. The 2012 Point-in-Time survey of homeless veterans in Virginia showed a slight decrease in the number of homeless veterans, from 931 in 2011 to 881 in 2012. Approximately 41% of Virginia veterans who are homeless live in the Greater Hampton Roads area. VWWP anticipates that the numbers of homeless veterans and their families and those at risk may increase as returning service members reenter Virginia's communities and seek employment in an economic climate that is continuing to struggle. In addition to supporting the expansion of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers and grant funding, such as the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), VWWP has been an advocate for policy and resources directed toward addressing this critical need. Governor McDonnell's 2012 budget included funding to employ two professionals to coordinate the statewide effort to reduce homelessness among Virginia's veterans and their families. At year's end, those positions are in recruitment and expected to be filled in early 2013.

Despite the lack of dedicated staff to address homeless issues, VWWP was able to help 157 veterans and family members across the Commonwealth find housing and supportive services in 2012. The following chart illustrates the numbers of veterans and family members served in each VWWP Region.



**Estimated Number of Veterans and Their Family Members Assisted in Finding
Permanent or Transitional Housing by VWWP Regional Consortia
January – November 2012**

	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Totals
Veterans Only	17	11	16	19	49	112
Veterans' Family Members	1	7	25	6	6	45
Total	18	12	41	18	55	157

Outreach

VISTAS

In the summer of 2012, VWWP applied for and was awarded a grant to engage VISTA workers with the program. Through funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service that flows through the state office of the Corporation, VWWP received the benefit of over \$100,000 in staff resources. Three VISTAs joined the program in August, 2012. An additional VISTA is coming on board in 2013. These unique staff positions are working to improve the outreach and public relations capacity of VWWP as well as developing a plan for engaging volunteers on a statewide basis. In four short months, the VISTAs have established media connections in their localities, supported VWWP events, distributed educational and marketing materials and developed an initial plan for a volunteer services program.

Roger Schlimbach, Region 1's Outreach, Marketing and Public Relations Specialist, is a recent graduate of the University of Mary Washington. A college major in English makes him perfectly suited to serve as the Region's marketing and outreach officer. Roger developed a radio Public Service Announcement which aired in the Charlottesville area encouraging veterans to seek help through VWWP. He has written several articles on the program in the region and statewide for publications such as the VA Veterans Integrated Services Network 6 (VISN 6) newsletter, and has arranged over a dozen interviews, both radio and TV, for the Region 1 staff. He has made connections with



reporters from all of the primary newspapers and continues to be instrumental in getting news out about the program.

Kadetra Cooper, Region 5's Outreach, Marketing and Public Relations Specialist, has a Master of Business Administration with an undergraduate degree in Marketing. Prior to



Eric Endries and Region 5 staff on *The Hampton Roads Show*.

joining VWWP, Kadetra had extensive experience in developing marketing and business plans. Kadetra has expanded access to media outlets and community organizations in Region 5. She is developing a Public Relations Press Kit for VWWP and a short "elevator" speech that all VWWP staff can use to easily help the public understand the purpose of the program and the resources available. She has contributed to

articles for statewide publications such as the VISN 6 newsletter; secured a live audience segment for VWWP with a local NBC affiliate news broadcast (*The Hampton Roads Show*); and has written numerous press releases for the Virginia Veterans Corps. Kadetra continues to develop relationships with primary newspaper reporters to cover stories on VWWP. Working with the other VISTAs, Kadetra leads the development of marketing and public relations plan for VWWP that can be sustained over time.

Charmion Anderson, Volunteer Services Developer, is also located in Region 5. Charmion is working on a Master of Business Administration and expects to complete her coursework in 2013. She served as a Virginia Veterans Corps Navigator from September 2011 until July 2012. Charmion is skilled in working with community organizations to develop partnerships and to identify volunteer opportunities. She is working on a plan for VWWP to have a volunteer services program.

The VISTAs are increasing VWWP's social media connections through Facebook, enhancing connections with local veterans' services organizations, publishing articles in the newsletter for VA VISN 6, scheduling television and radio interviews for VWWP Regional Directors and staff, and supporting community events. These invaluable staff are helping to make the VWWP a household name throughout Virginia and providing veterans and their families with critical information about community support.



Advancing

In 2013 VWWP is again poised to expand its reach and effectiveness. With a focus on military service members and families, VWWP plans to get more involved with schools in an effort to support military families and military children. In addition, we will continue to build upon our work with state and federal agencies to reduce the number of veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The changes in healthcare services in Virginia and nationally portend the need for VWWP to become more involved in ensuring that veterans and their families are able to access needed primary care services which often serve as the gateway for specialty care. Expanded focus will also be given to educating primary care providers on the health issues of veterans and to ensure that they are aware of conditions that may arise as a result of military service. Refinement of our data system will enable us to target our efforts in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. We are meeting this year with enthusiasm and renewed commitment as we strive to improve the quality of lives for our military service members, veterans and their families.