Connecting Veterans & Military to their Community
2019 Summary Report

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

CURRENT COMMUNITIES

San Diego • South Bend • Phoenix

Thrive: to prosper; to grow vigorously; flourish

Each day at Vets' Community Connections (VCC) we see how connecting veteran/military families to expanded networks in their community enables them to *__thrive__*.

This year, VCC connected a record number of veterans, military, family members and caregivers with their communities, and continued to broaden the participation of community members wanting to do more than simply say 'thanks for your service'.

We're doing more on a small budget. We're leveraging local partner organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce, 2-1-1 call centers, Rotary clubs, government entities and veteran serving organizations. We've laid the groundwork for a replicable model and will launch two new VCC communities in early 2020.

Metrics:

This past year we helped connect more than 1,900 veterans, military, family members, and caregivers with individuals and businesses in their communities.

Our metric results for 2019 include:

- *98%* of participating veterans, military, and family members experience a successful connection by receiving the information/product/service they desired.
- *98%* of Community Resource Members report satisfaction with their experience.
- *93%* of participating veterans, military, and family members feel more connected to the community; leading to happier, healthier, and more financially secure lives.
- *99%* of civilian participants believe they have a better understanding of veteran and military families.
- *99%* of veteran and military family callers would refer another person to VCC.

Top VCC topics included:

- *Reliable business referrals:* Ranging from automotive resources to home repair

- *Career development and employment:* Ranging from "What resume writing resources are available to me?" to "What are some strategies to obtain federal employment and who can help me with that?"

- *Social activities and events:* Ranging from "How can I become a part of a local veteran group that meets regularly?" to "What types of events are available for my family and me to attend?"

Metric data is reported back to the National VCC Board and the local VCC Advisory Boards to help identify gaps in services and improvements that can be made to strengthen program effectiveness.
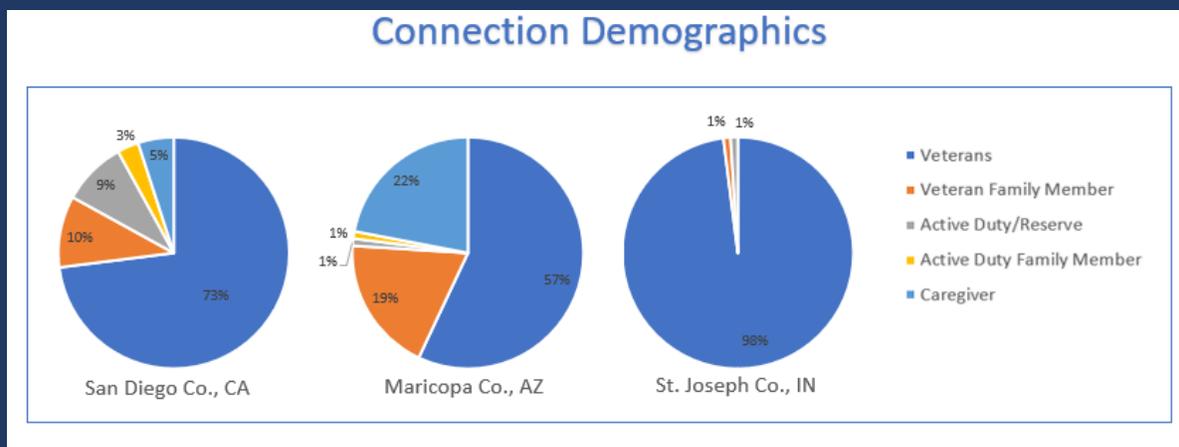
Our Impact:

"I wanted to make a job change but didn't know where to start. VCC connected me and I was able to find new employment with better hours and better wages." **– Navy Veteran**

"With [my husband] having such health issues, we never have time to ourselves. This gift was very gracious and thoughtful, a memory that we will never forget." **– Post 9/11 Veteran Caregiver**
A caregiver and her Veteran husband had postponed their honeymoon or years due to his health. VCC partnered with local businesses to create a honeymoon 'staycation' complete with a hotel stay, dinner, and a welcoming gift basket.

"My home's A/C was broken I couldn't live there because of the heat. VCC connected me to an organization that paid to fix it and I slept in my bed at home last night. It's nice to know that there are people who care about veterans." **– Army Veteran**

"It was so hard to find employment as a military spouse. VCC made introductions that I didn't even know I needed to find not only a job, but a meaningful career. VCC has changed my life."
– Active Duty Marine Spouse

"I came to VCC when our family's life was bordering on crisis – not having a functioning car meant not being able to show to work or get the kids places. VCC connected me to a give-away program which we applied for and now our car issues are in the distant past."
– Navy Veteran

"VCC helped connect our Society of the 5th Division to local artists that made a special memorial for our annual reunion that will be treasured for years to come." **– Vietnam Army Veteran**

"Vets' Community Connections, an integral part of our veteran and military support network, was launched in San Diego. Our collaborative approach to serving our heroes here is a model for the rest of the country." **– Congressman Scott Peters**

Local Core Partners:

Year Highlights:

1. *Record number of connections for veteran/military families:* Through referrals from our partner organizations, online submissions and calls via 2-1-1 or our 1-844 number, we made a record number of connections to the community. Local businesses, community members and nonprofit organizations consistently stepped up to assist our veteran/military neighbors.

2. *Expanded connection offerings to fill gaps in the local community:* VCC's *Caregivers in the Community* program hosted quarterly events to provide caregivers with respite and an introduction to other resources. The *Arts in the Community* program hosted 6 pop-up cafes to introduce veterans to a whole host of art resources in San Diego. Our *Careers in the Community* program served more than 90 veterans and their spouses who were seeking new career opportunities in organizations eager to hire veterans.

3. *Increased participation in local VCC annual events:* Over 150 local leaders came out to celebrate VCC and the collaborative spirit of San Diego in supporting veterans/military, with Congressman Scott Peters as the keynote speaker. VCC also hosted its first ever **Rally South Bend**, with over 39 local organizations and businesses engaging with the more than 200 veterans who attended.

4. *VCC President speaks at Corporation for National and Community Service Research summit:* Kari McDonough shared VCC's work mobilizing volunteers in new ways at the community level.

5. *Launched as own 501c3 with talented National VCC Board:* After three years in operation under the umbrella of fiscal sponsors, VCC is now its own recognized organization. The full board can be accessed at https://vetscommunityconnections.org/who-we-are.

6. *Received national and regional funding support to include:*