Veterans Outreach
County of San Luis Obispo
Reaching Out to Local Veterans and Their Families

Breanne Salmon, Program Therapist
Benefits at a glance

• Veterans are connected with a community of resources that provide unique services to address their needs.

• Veterans are introduced to a mental health therapist who works exclusively with veterans and their families.

• Veterans learn about mental health services and reduce stigma behind accessing services.

• Veterans improve their emotional well-being through the activities and experiences offered.

• Veterans are connected with other veterans and gain a better understanding of their unique experiences.
“The atmosphere was very welcoming. It was nice to feel integrated especially after coming back from deployment. It’s one of the few time since I’ve been home I’ve felt like part of a community and it was nice to have the comfort of my spouse to ease the anxiety of coming out for the first time.”
Community that makes a difference

• “I suffer from PTSD and this is the first time I have been out of the house in a long time.”
• “Feels like family.”
“A lot of people crawl under a rock, think there’s something wrong with them. They don’t know there are others in the same shape that they are. This helps them learn that, and that they can interact with others.”
Connecting and socializing with other veterans

“When you’re around people with the same issues as you have, you don’t feel quite as lonely.”
Better understanding of themselves

• “What happens a lot with guys and gals who’ve been in a combat environment is that it’s a much different world here... You get in the workplace, in society and start doing things and people are looking at you cross-eyed wondering what’s up... You think you’re all right but you’re not. So doing things with other vets, you realize you need a transition period. [These events] help because you’re interacting with other vets and you learn that there is life after combat.”
“I wish this had been available 20 or so years ago. For the young people now, this is such a resource that helps them know what’s out there. Before, you didn’t know anything.”
Resources that impact veterans and their families

• “I wish I would have found a program like this before my family became a train wreck.”
Resources feedback

I have become more informed about the following resources because I attended this event (Percentage Responding “Yes”)

• Benefit Services 55%
• Counseling Services 65%
• Physical Activities 80%
• Social Opportunities 70%
Resources feedback

I am likely to access the following resources because I attended this event (Percentage Responding “Yes”)

- Benefit Services 75%
- Counseling Services 70%
- Physical Activities 80%
- Social Opportunities 70%
“Getting out with other veterans, the peer part of it. And the recreational time I spent with my kids. I think they were both therapeutic in themselves.”
A lasting impact

• Every interviewee believed that the events made a positive difference to their emotional well-being.

• “This was amazing seriously. A dream come true. I won’t stop talking about today for a long time.”
“I probably had unrecognized depression as a child and it got worse after Vietnam.... Lately the Outreach program has helped me find [out] again that I feel better after some activity.”
The need to have fun

• “When you’re zipping down the zip line, you’re having fun, not thinking about the bad things. You realize that was fun and it got all this bad stuff off your mind, let’s do it again.... The more you learn to do that, the better you can deal with your problems.”
• “Personally for me it has [helped]. I’ve talked to [the therapist] before, during the events. She kind of knows your issues, what you’re going through, how hard it is. There’s a sense of peace that you can go to her, that she’s there at the event.”
• “It’s really hard for people to go to therapy. Like for me, I know I need it but I connect with nature instead. But sometimes you need that individual to talk to. It’s perfect to have someone who puts herself out there instead of you having to go find her.”
By attending this event, I have gained knowledge regarding mental health challenges amongst veterans. (Better informed)
- 80% of participants

The information provided at this event helps reduce negative labels regarding mental health challenges in the veteran community. (Stigma Reduction)
- 90% of participants
Filling in the gap for our community’s veterans

• Providing services and resources for veterans who are waiting for their VA benefits to begin

• Providing services for veterans who may not be eligible for VA services

• Connecting veterans and their family members to resources available to them in the community and beyond
Upcoming Event:

Veterans Outreach
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Join us for our next event...

Kayaking in Morro Bay
Saturday, May 18th
9:00AM - 12:00PM
FREE for veterans (one guest welcome)

To register or learn about future activities
call 781-4285 or email ggranados@co.slo.ca.us