

From: Julie Erfle <erfleuncuffed@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, November 9, 2016 2:40 PM

To: Julie Erfle

Subject: ADVISORY: Vets' Community Connections to Launch in Maricopa County

Media Advisory

November 9, 2016

CONTACT: Julie Erfle, 602-361-6528

Vets' Community Connections to Launch in Maricopa County

Maricopa County one of three initial launch sites for new veteran community reintegration initiative

WHAT:

After a two-year development effort to bring more Americans into the community reintegration process for veterans and their families, Maricopa County public and private sector community leaders will formally launch Vets' Community Connections (VCC) on November 14.

Elected officials will join private sector and local veteran and military leaders at the event to be held on Monday, November 14 at 9 a.m. at the headquarters of 2-1-1 Arizona, which is where VCC Maricopa will be based.

Vets' Community Connections provides individuals who want to do more than say "thanks for your service" with a channel to use their own professional experience and expertise to respond to veteran and military family relocation and reintegration questions in a wide variety of fields: education, health, business, recreation, arts, community service and a host of other areas which collectively make up the communities in which we live. 2-1-1-based "Vet Connectors" will connect veteran and military family callers with community participants able to respond to caller questions in their knowledge areas. Community participant involvement is based on an individual's own schedule and time availability. Maricopa County residents can sign up to participate in the initiative by completing a short application on the VCC website:

vetscommunityconnections.org or by texting "VETCONX" to 66866.

WHY:

Veterans and military family members feel a loss of community during transition. Respondents in a recent San Diego survey overwhelmingly reported that they don't want another website but rather personal, human connections to people who know their community and whose first-hand advice and information they can trust. Vets' Community Connections provides a platform for easy connection to a broader community of businesses, organizations and social groups who want to give back to those that have served us.

Maricopa County was chosen as one of three pilot communities for the initiative, which is supported and co-sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Wounded Warrior Project. Other pilots are St. Joseph's County (South Bend), Indiana and San Diego County. VCC was co-founded in 2014 by former senior Pentagon

spokesman Doug Wilson and organizational management specialist Kari McDonough. Both will participate in the November 14 press conference.

WHO:

Mayor Greg Stanton, City of Phoenix
Supervisor Steve Chucri, Maricopa County
Catherine Rea, CEO 2-1-1 Arizona/Community Information and Referral Services
Kari McDonough, Co-founder Vets' Community Connections
Doug Wilson, Co-founder Vets' Community Connections
Roger Ferland, Vietnam Veteran and 2014 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year
Tiffany Fisher, Veteran Engagement Director Team Red, White, Blue
Kathy Hancock, Executive Director, Fennemore Craig and military spouse
Felix Zayas, Iraq Veteran, West Point Graduate and CEO Harbinger Technologies Groups
Penny Allee Taylor, Chief Public Policy Officer, Valley of the Sun United Way

WHERE:

2-1-1 Arizona
2200 N Central Ave, Suite 211
Phoenix, AZ 85004

WHEN:

Monday, November 14
8:15 AM hosted breakfast
9:00 AM press conference

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From: Julie Erfle <erfleuncuffed@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 14, 2016 9:43 AM
To: Julie Erfle
Subject: RELEASE: Vets' Community Connections Launches in Maricopa County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 14, 2016
CONTACT: Julie Erfle, 602-361-6528

Vets' Community Connections Launches in Maricopa County
Maricopa County one of three initial launch sites nationally

PHOENIX, November 14 – After a two-year development effort to bring more Americans into the community reintegration process for veterans and their families, Maricopa County public and private sector community leaders formally launched Vets' Community Connections (VCC) on November 14.

Elected officials joined private sector and local veteran and military leaders at the event held at 2-1-1 Arizona, which played a key role in the design and development of the initiative and is where VCC is housed.

"Vets' Community Connections is the perfect channel for those of us who want to do more for our military families than say 'thanks for your service,'" said Penny Allee Taylor, Chief Public Policy Officer of Valley of the Sun United Way and a member of the Maricopa County VCC Advisory Group.

"We can all play a role in veteran reintegration," noted Maricopa County Supervisor Steve Chucuri. "Perhaps it's offering information on community services, the arts, neighborhood businesses, or youth sports leagues. The beauty of Vets' Community Connections is that it gives individuals the chance to use their own experience and expertise to respond to veteran and military family questions and needs."

The process is simple. Veterans, military members, and spouses call 2-1-1 to be linked with a Vet Connector: a trained call respondent who will listen to the caller's question and connect him or her with an appropriate community member via phone or email. Community participants agree to answer a call or an email from a veteran, military member or spouse when their expertise matches a caller's need.

"Our local veterans and their families aren't looking for another website," stated Roger Ferland, a Vietnam veteran and 2014 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year.

"They're looking for personal connections to their fellow citizens and businesses who can provide them with answers to their questions and information they can trust."

"This initiative gives returning veterans like me the contacts necessary to help our transitions succeed," said Felix Zayas, an Army veteran and West Point graduate who served in Iraq.

A recent survey commissioned by the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce noted that veterans and family members in transition to civilian life valued human connection and new networks into the community far more than additional Internet resources.

Maricopa County was chosen as one of three communities for the initial launch of this initiative. Other sites are San Diego County and St. Joseph's County (South Bend), Indiana. VCC was co-founded in 2014 by former senior Pentagon spokesman Doug Wilson and organizational management specialist Kari McDonough.

More than four-dozen public and private sector leaders and organization representatives have worked to develop the infrastructure and initial support for Vets' Community Connections, under the leadership of 2-1-1 Arizona.

"2-1-1 Arizona has been a strong supporter of our veterans, military and their families; providing connections to community and health services, resources and information with community partners for more than five years," explained Catherine Rea, CEO of 2-1-1 Arizona. "VCC is a natural fit for us and compliments the work already being done in our region, while also offering many more Maricopa County residents a chance to be part of community reintegration efforts."

Elected officials across the county have expressed strong support for VCC. "Phoenix has always been supportive of our men and women in the military," said Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton. "Today, I'm asking our residents to continue that support by signing up at vetscommunityconnections.org and offering the help and services our returning veterans need to transition back into society."

Financial, in-kind and other contributions to VCC initiatives are community-based. The Maricopa County initiative has been built on community donations of time and talent, supplemented by a VISTA/Americorps volunteer award and in-kind database technology donated by Salesforce Foundation. Maricopa County's VCC Advisory Group will coordinate long-term development efforts.

With the support of the National Association of Counties and the Wounded Warrior Project, Vets' Community Connections is now beginning the process of partnering with national organizations to expand the initiative nationwide and apply the pilot community templates to communities large and small throughout the United States.

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