

Mentors Needed for Harnett Veterans Treatment Court

Now in its second year, Harnett County's first-in-the-state Veterans Treatment Court has proved an astounding success as the court has helped veterans who have struggled making the transition from combat back to civilian life successfully reenter society. The District 11A Veterans Treatment Court graduated its first six veterans last November during a one-year anniversary celebration. One of the graduates, Tommy Rieman, was featured along with the court on CBS Sunday Morning, which documented the Silver Star recipient's journey from Iraq back home to the United States and his struggle to adjust to life away from the warzone.

One of the major reasons the court has been so successful is that each veteran is paired with a mentor who holds them accountable and assists them through the treatment process. As more veterans have learned of and applied to the program, more mentors are needed to help them navigate the treatment process.

Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Coordinator Steve Dally said there are currently 17 veterans participating in the court's treatment program with 14 veterans waiting to be accepted to the program and only eight mentors available to serve them.

When veterans begin the treatment program, they are given an individualized schedule and treatment plan. Veterans start out by going to court every Wednesday. Over the course of the next one to two years, they transition from weekly

court appearances to having to attend every other week, then every three weeks and finally on a monthly basis.

During each appearance, the judge gives the veterans an assignment, which can range from completing community service to recitation of one of the court's rules and regulations. The assignments are aimed at keeping the veterans focused on their treatment.

That's where the mentor comes in.

Mentors attend court with their veterans and serve as accountability partners to make sure the veterans complete their assignments and are progressing through the program as they should. More than anything else, the mentor is someone the veteran can talk to.

"These guys need a buddy," said Dally. "A mentor is a listener. When you visit with a guy, you let him talk and you listen to what he's saying."

Because veterans will likely be dealing with issues related to their combat experience, mentors must also have served in the military.

"We prefer combat veterans, but will take any honorably discharged veteran," said Dally.

Harnett County Veterans Services Officer Eric Truesdale said court officials attempt to pair participants with mentors from the same branch of military service to help them feel more comfortable talking about their experiences with their mentors.

"Air Force and Air Force talk one lan-

What's Happening in Harnett?

Want to keep up with community events and activities happening in Harnett County this summer? Check out the new Community Calendar at www.harnett.org/publicinfo/.

The calendar compiles community events taking place throughout Harnett County and puts them in a single location.

To submit an event for inclusion in the community calendar, email bhaney@harnett.org.

You can also view the dates and times for meetings of the Harnett County Board of Commissioners and other county boards, as well as dates the county will be closed for holidays using the county calendar at www.harnett.org.

Keep up with Harnett County on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and go to www.harnett.org/publicinfo for news releases, important updates, a community calendar and other information.



guage, Marines talk another and the Army talks another," he said.

Outside of previous military service, the main qualification for being a mentor is being a good listener.

"You don't have to have a degree in psychology. You've just got to be a good friend to that veteran," said Senior Mentor Gordon Harrington. "We're not their judge, jury, doctor or any of that."

Normally, Harrington said, the time commitment for mentors is less than two hours a week. Mentors are asked to attend their veteran's court appearances and to sit and talk with their veteran as needed. Some veterans will be required to attend treatment classes as part of the program and mentors are there to make sure they keep up with their appointments. Some mentors may even provide rides to appointments for veterans without transportation. Mentors are reimbursed for mileage.

"Basically, your job is to assist the veteran through the program," said Harrington. "You listen to them and try to help them with their difficulties."

Many times, he said, veterans will tell their mentors things they don't feel comfortable saying in court and the mentor can advise them or put them in touch with the right person to help them.

"You develop a bond and there's a lot of trust there," said Harrington.

He said the transformation that takes place in the lives of the veterans over the course of the program is unbelievable.



Harnett County Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Coordinator Steve Dally (left, at podium) recognizes mentors during the court's one-year anniversary celebration last November. More mentors are needed to accommodate a surge in veterans applying to the program seeking treatment.

"There was one guy who, when he first came in, he was like a zombie. Three or four months later, he came in wearing a suit and tie, he was cleaned up and had a smile on his face," he said. "When you work with one of these guys, you see the change in them. They have their confidence restored and they get their sense of community back. You're reminding them who they are and that they can move forward in society."

He said the rewards he's received from being a mentor have been great.

"I get more out of it than I put in," Harrington said. "For me, it's one of the most rewarding things in the world."

Anyone interested in being a mentor for Harnett County's District 11A Veterans Treatment Court should contact Mentor Coordinator Steve Dally at (910) 890-6610. For those who aren't veterans and would like to get involved in the treatment court, there are peer support roles as well. The court also needs sponsors to donate gift cards for gas and food for veterans participating in the treatment program.

Harnett County RSVP Needs Volunteers

The Harnett County Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) needs volunteers willing to serve their fellow residents across the county.

Harnett County RSVP was formed in February 1973 to provide residents age 55 and older with volunteer opportunities at a variety of locations throughout the county. Today, the program has 277 active volunteers who provide service at 28 volunteer sites.

Sites include the Harnett County Courthouse, where volunteers serve at the information desk and as mentors with the Veterans Treatment Court;

Harnett Health, where volunteers sit at hospital registration desks, work in the gift shop and make toys for children who come into the emergency room; and Harnett County Schools, where volunteers serve as tutors and proctors, and work in school libraries and front offices. Volunteers also give time to the Meals on Wheels program and serve at senior centers, churches, thrift stores, libraries and museums across the county.

"Currently, we need volunteers for the information desk at Central Harnett Hospital in Lillington and to deliver

Meals on Wheels in the Dunn, Lillington and Angier areas," said LeAnn Blackmon, who serves as director of Harnett County RSVP through the Division on Aging.

Volunteers who register with Harnett County RSVP may receive accidental insurance at no cost. RSVP volunteers are also honored and recognized for their service during programs and ceremonies throughout the year.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information about Harnett County RSVP, contact LeAnn Blackmon at (910) 893-7578.

Department Spotlight

Soil & Water Conservation District

Ask anyone to name Harnett County's greatest asset and you'll likely hear one answer rise to the top – the Cape Fear River. The river splits Harnett County down the middle and provides the water necessary to supply 125,000 people in Harnett and the surrounding region with dependable drinking water each day. It is also a major engine for tourism and economic development.

With all the Cape Fear River means to Harnett County, it's important to make sure it's taken care of. The Harnett County Soil and Water Conservation District is charged with encouraging proactive conservation of the Cape Fear River along with all the county's soil and water resources.

Resource Conservationist Neal Taylor heads up Harnett County SWCD. The agency shares an office with the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which partners with SWCD and offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.

"When you've got highly erodible land, you've got sedimentation. When sediment leaves a field, the chemicals that are sprayed attach to that sediment. There's a lot of rolling land in Harnett County, so it's always going to be going into a stream somewhere," said Taylor. "Ninety percent of the creeks in Harnett County go to the Cape Fear River, and that's our main drinking water supply. By putting these measures in, we're breaking slopes and filtering that before

it ever hits, keeping our water clean."

The SWCD is governed by a five-member board of supervisors with three members elected and two appointed by the State Soil and Water Commission. Each member serves a four-year term. Gerald Temple is the current chairman. The board meets the third Thursday of each month.

Even though SWCD board members appear on the ballot during election season, Taylor said most people don't know what the agency does.

"They think we're the regulatory force in everything," he said. "They think we carry badges and all, but we don't. We provide technical assistance."

Harnett County SWCD administers a variety of programs like the N.C. Agricultural Cost Share Program (NCACSP), which provides landowners and farmers with active farming operations with the technical and financial resources to install conservation practices that insure protection of soil and water resources for future generations. During 2015, Harnett County SWCD had 19 NCACSP contracts and \$38,734 was allocated to address erosion and nutrient loss in agricultural fields, sediment/nutrient delivery reduction, animal waste management, streamside erosion due to heavy livestock use and prevention of chemical pollution.

Anyone interested in the NCACSP should submit an application to the Harnett County SWCD office at 126 Alexander Drive, Lillington.

Harnett County SWCD also provides technical assistance to citizens who do not participate in the NCACSP. Producers may receive assistance with issues including drain tiles, ditching, terraces, grassed waterways and pond maintenance, and home visits are available for assistance with residential drainage and erosion issues.

The agency also has two no-till grain drills, which it rents out at a low cost to promote the use of conservation tillage and cover crop use on Harnett County farm land.

Conservation Education Coordinator Lynn Lambert is responsible for expanding knowledge of the Soil and Water Conservation District and conservation efforts through SWCD's Conservation Education Program.

Programs include participation in the Agri-Science Field Day with the Sandhills Antique Farm Equipment Club, Environmental Science Field Day at Anderson Creek County Park, Resource Conservation Workshop at N.C. State University and the Area-7 Environment, which brings middle and high school students from eight counties together to compete in different knowledge categories such as wildlife, soil, forestry and current environmental issues.

Harnett County SWCD also works with Harnett County Schools and with the Voluntary Ag-District, which encourages the preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development in recognition of the importance of agriculture to the economy of North Carolina and Harnett County, which ranks 14th in the state for agricultural cash receipts.

In addition to NRCS, Harnett County SWCD partners with the N.C. State Forest Service, N.C. Cooperative Extension, the Farm Service Agency and wildlife agencies.

To learn more about Harnett County SWCD, go to <http://www.harnett.org/soilwater/>.



Harnett County SWCD staff provided technical assistance to a local farmer to install this V-ditch and drain tile.

Human Resources Corner

Changes to Employee Health Insurance

The beginning of the new fiscal year on July 1 also marks the beginning of the new insurance year. This year, there are several minor changes to insurance benefits for Harnett County's workforce.

Health Insurance

The following changes to employee Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) health insurance coverage will take effect July 1, 2015:

- Medical deductibles have been lowered to \$2,000 for an individual and \$4,000 for a family. After meeting the first deductible, employees pay 30 percent until they meet the total out-of-pocket maximum of \$5,500 for an individual or \$11,000 for a family.
- Prescription deductibles are \$1,100 for individuals and \$2,200 for families.

To save money on medical care, employees are encouraged to check and see if procedures can be done in an office setting instead of a hospital. To save money on maintenance medication, use Prime Therapeutics mail order to receive three months of medication for the price of two months. For a \$10 copay, this can save \$120.

Vision Coverage

Blue 20-20 vision insurance, which is part of BCBSNC, has not changed. It helps pay for the cost of frames, lenses and contacts, and gives discounts on laser surgery, contact lens solution and non-prescription sunglasses with participating providers.

Your BCBSNC health insurance will also pay for your annual eye exam at 100 percent (some tests not covered) as part of preventive care.

Please note that BCBSNC closes the website HR uses to update, add or terminate information until the end of June so if you have made any recent changes, please be patient as we wait to input the information into the system.

You should also review your paystub to make sure the deductions are correct. Please check, especially in the first few months, to

confirm that what you requested matches what is coming out of your paycheck. If you find any errors, let HR know immediately. Make a habit of reviewing your paystub monthly. Information on how to access your paystub can be found at www.harnett.org/prmo/.

Dental Coverage

The employee cost of dental care through Delta Dental has also gone down this year and more dental offices in Harnett County are now in-network, including the East Carolina University Dental School in Lillington. Employees can receive dental cleanings and exams twice a year at no cost. The deductible for dental care is \$25 for individuals and \$75 for families for up to \$1,000 annually in dental care. Note that if you go out of network, you will be billed for any amount over what Delta Dental pays. Check to see if your dentist is a participating provider.

Other Benefits

Reliance life and short-term disability insurance has not changed. Employees should make sure their beneficiaries are up-to-date. You can make changes to your beneficiaries any time by completing the Reliance Beneficiary form on the HR website and sending it to the HR office.

Employees also have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Health Management Systems of America (HMSA). The EAP confidentially helps employees deal with a wide range of personal problems including marital and family issues, alcoholism, drug abuse, and financial and psychological issues. If you need help, call (800) 767-5320.

Transamerica has replaced USABLE for supplemental policies for cancer, hospital indemnity, critical illness and accident. You can now file a claim and receive your wellness benefit by calling (800) 251-7254 or going to www.tebcs.com.

Because open enrollment is now complete, the only way to make changes to your health, dental and vision policies is to have a qualifying life event such as a birth, death, marriage, divorce or change in employment status for you or one of your dependents.

Upcoming Events

- The Town of Lillington will hold its annual Fourth of July celebration Saturday, July 4 from 2 until 9 p.m. Events will include a duck rodeo and duck derby along with inflatable rides at the Cape Fear River and fireworks at dusk along with a classic car show in Lillington Park. For more information, contact the Lillington Chamber of Commerce at (910) 893-2864.
- The next Lillington Community Blood Drive will be held Thursday, July 9 from 1 to 5:30 p.m. in the Harnett County Government Complex Commons Area. The blood drive is sponsored by Harnett County Public Health and Harnett County RSVP. To make an appointment, call (910) 893-7578.
- Harnett County Parks and Recreation is accepting applications for co-ed softball, which will begin Sept. 15. Anyone interested in playing should contact Drew Bryant at (910) 893-7518 or wbryant@harnett.org for more information or an application.

If you know of any important events for August or the upcoming months that need to be included in this newsletter, please email bhaney@harnett.org. Check the Community Calendar at www.harnett.org/publicinfo for more upcoming events.

Big Summer Fun, Small Budget

Staying home, or even close to home, can save you the time and money you would've spent on a big vacation. Whether you are saving for a big trip in the future or simply prefer to stay close to home, there are many great ways to have big summer fun on a small budget. Plus, you'll still have a camera full of memorable photos.

To start planning for your summer of fun, consider the following costs:

- **Transportation** – Will you use your car or rent one? Do you even need a car?
- **Lodging** – Hotel, RV or tent? Or return to the comfort of your own bed at the end of the day
- **Activities** – Food, park fees or other entertainment?

Stay local

Seeing the local sites is an affordable alternative to a big trip.

- **Afternoon movie:** Many local theaters offer cheaper rates for current and recently released movies, if you're willing to see the movie earlier in the day. Big chains often throw in combo deals for snacks and other concession stand items.
- **Where to go:** Like strawberries? What about blues music? From rhododendrons to cantaloupes, many cities and towns celebrate their local heritage with festivals and parades. Start with the state tourism bureau at VisitNC.com to find area events.
- **Free/low cost activities:** Look for discounted theme park tickets at your local financial institution or on your grocery store receipt. You can also check soda cans and associations like AARP.org or AAA.com.

Many NC festivals and fairs offer free or low cost admission during specially-themed days. But plan wisely. Leave room in your budget to take home a bushel or a basket of something tasty or fun. In addition to local events, a number of state museums and attractions are free or offer discounted rates.

- **Try new foods:** Visit a few local restaurants. Since you're near home, you can save money by taking advantage of early bird lunch or dinner specials. You may just discover a new dish.
- **Take a drive:** Stay close to home and forget about the cost of airfare or train rides. Instead, take advantage of low gas prices and drive to new sites around your community.

Stay-at-home

With a "staycation" you can opt to stay home. This could be the time you use to work on a home repair, relax with a good book, or revisit or learn new hobbies.

Try hosting a family movie marathon with low-cost video rentals from your local library. If you subscribe to online streaming media, grab your mobile device and pitch a tent in the backyard for a movie night under the stars.

Share your photos

Whatever type of "staycation" you choose, include your friends and share your pictures on your social media pages. Just remember, if you're headed to a festival away from home, don't announce your plans online. For your personal security, wait until you return from your trip to share your pictures.

Looking for more ways to make your budget stretch? Contact a financial planner for more information.

Do You Know the Warning Signs of Dehydration?

You can lose up to 10 cups of water a day by sweating, breathing and eliminating waste. This is potentially harmful to your body since water and electrolytes are essential for proper body functions. To combat heat-related illnesses, re-hydrate immediately when you experience one or more of these symptoms:

- Excessive thirst
- Sleepiness or fatigue
- Dry mouth
- Muscle weakness
- Headache
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Inability to sweat

If you become dehydrated and are unable to drink fluids, try the following:

- Suck on ice chips
- Suck on a popsicle
- Sip through a straw

Did you know?

Overhydration is just as serious as dehydration. Overhydration happens when a person drinks too much, and can result in dizziness and even seizures. When working in the heat, limit liquid intake to no more than one and a half quarts per hour and 12 quarts in a 24-hour period.

Harnett County's Employee Message Board

Do you have an upcoming event, fundraiser or announcement that you want your fellow county employees to know about? How about items for sale? Did you know Harnett County has an employee message board for just this purpose?

To access the employee message board, just follow these simple steps.

- Open Microsoft Outlook
- Click on "... " at the bottom and select "Folders"
- On the left side of the page, double click "Public Folders"
- Double click "All Public Folders"
- Select "County Message Board"

Harnett County EMS Offers CPR Training Classes

The leading cause of death among adults over 40 in the United States is sudden cardiac arrest or SCA, most commonly referred to as a heart attack.

Every year, nearly 360,000 people experience SCA outside of a hospital in the United States. Sadly, nine out of every 10 of these people die because CPR wasn't started soon enough to allow time for EMS to arrive – that's almost a thousand people dying each day from heart attacks suffered outside of a hospital. The number of deaths each year from SCA surpasses multiple other causes of death combined.

In an effort to reduce this frightening statistic, Harnett County is providing Basic Life Support and Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) training for county employees. Paramedics with Harnett County EMS have trained more than 130 county employees from various departments in Basic Life Support and AED training. Employees were given hands-on training, which taught them how to recognize and implement CPR for a victim of SCA at any age.

"With this training, our goal is to improve the quality of life for citizens and visitors in Harnett County," said EMS Training Officer West Barefoot. "Knowing CPR doesn't just benefit our employees in the workplace, but is beneficial to anyone they live with and interact with in the public."



Harnett County employees undergo Basic Life Support training.

Barefoot said the difference between knowing and not knowing CPR could mean life or death for a close friend, loved one, coworker or customer. Training county employees to use CPR will ultimately increase the chances of saving lives in the event of SCA.

"Just exposing county employees to CPR training empowers them with the ability to remain calm and rational in emergency situations and to provide life-saving treatment to a victim of SCA," Barefoot said.

In addition to training county employees, Harnett County EMS offers hands only CPR training to businesses and civic groups across Harnett County at no cost. In the last two months, nearly 500 people in some of Harnett County's civic, medical, business and religious organizations have been trained to recognize and treat SCA. If you are interested in Basic Life Support and AED training, contact EMS Training Officer West Barefoot at wbarefoot@harnett.org or at (910) 893-0723.

Beat the Heat: Precautions for Working Outdoors

Working in warmer weather is a welcome break from the colder months but it brings along some unique challenges like the risk of sunburn, heat stroke and bug bites that can make you sick. Be prepared and stay safe while working outdoors.

- **Extreme heat:** Heat stroke, exhaustion, cramps and rash are all common yet dangerous signals that your body is too warm. Watch out for high temperatures, severe humidity and limited air movement.
- **Ultraviolet (UV) radiation:** Cover up in tightly-woven clothing, use sunscreen before going outside, wear a protective hat, sport UV-

absorbent shades and limit sun exposure, if possible.

- **Mosquitoes:** Cover any cut or scraped skin and wear repellent or thick clothing.
- **Ticks:** Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, a hat and repellents.
- **Snakes:** Educate yourself about the types of poisonous snakes in your region. If you have been bitten, seek medical attention even if you know the snake is not poisonous. Carefully note the snake's color(s) and shape.
- **Stinging insects:** Avoid wearing cologne or perfume and refrain from scented toiletries. Bathe daily

and wear clean clothing, as sweat often attracts stinging insects.

- **Spiders:** Be able to easily identify the three types of venomous spiders found in the United States: the black widow, brown recluse and hobo (also known as violin) spiders.
- **Scorpions:** Wear long sleeves, pants, leather gloves and always shake out clothing and shoes before putting them on.
- **Poisonous plants:** Direct contact with plants is one way to be exposed, but touching tools that have had direct contact or inhaling particles from burning plants are other hazards.