



# WE HONOR VETERANS

## Partner Networking Call 12/19/13 Call Summary

### Strategies for engaging local media in your Veteran activities

Anita Brikman, NHPCO Senior Vice President of Strategic Communications

- **Veterans Day Coverage:** Before Veterans Day NHPCO solicited stories and pictures from our partners. One of these stories was featured on **Defense News** and an ABC camera crew visited a Level Four partner and did a special about their Veteran's work. Don Schumacher, NHPCO President & CEO, was joined by a Volunteer Coordinator to speak about *WHV* on Fox news. We were able to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time and we plan on doing even more next year.
- **Four Tips for Engaging the Media**
  1. Start the initiative early. Your local media will need to know well ahead of time if you are conducting a ceremony for a unique Veteran patient, presenting a Veteran with lost medals, fulfilling a final wish or caring for Female Veterans. Also, inform NHPCO of these special events so that we can help your local story get more national coverage.
  2. Have pictures available when pitching to the media. Take pictures or video of an honor guard ceremony at the bedside. Also be ready to share individual stories.
  3. Make Veterans Available. You will want to speak about the program but also have Veteran Volunteers available to talk to the media about what the program means to them and the patients they interact with.
  4. Don't send out mass press releases. Reporters receive 200 press releases per day; your story is more likely to get covered if you have an individual relationship with a media professional and can email them an individual pitch. Also remember to always include your phone number.
- **Final Takeaways:** Look for and seek out heart melting stories such as special recognitions, final wishes being fulfilled and Honor Flight trips. Email me directly at [abrikman@nhpco.org](mailto:abrikman@nhpco.org) so that I can pitch these at the national level and help you get even more local coverage. Also, note that service-related issues such as PTSD are getting a lot of coverage and are prime for media attention.
- **Media Best Practice from Destiny Boyd, Frontier Hospice in Helena, MT:** We were able to get some media print coverage on Veterans Day. We planned the event itself months in advance; the event included a uniformed Veteran presenting Veterans with a pin and carnation. We just kept asking our local media outlets over and over again. We never focused on hospice but rather on the individual stories of the Veterans being honored, and we also included photographs. The local paper showed up and did a wonderful story and afterwards I thanked the reporter in order to build on that relationship.
- **Question and Answer Session**

1. **Q:** *On Veterans Day we conducted a very nice recognition ceremony with photos, interviews and a poem. We didn't think to invite the media, is it too late to submit to NHPCO?*
  2. **A:** NHPCO: We won't be able to get any further media attention from a past story but we do have a section on the website where we post stories and best practices from our *WHV* Partners. Submit your story to [Veterans@nhpco.org](mailto:Veterans@nhpco.org) and we will see about posting it. In the future when you have important events or stories, let us know ahead of time.
  3. **Q:** *We are a small hospice in a rural environment with limited media outlets. Do you have any suggestions for trying to engage local media in a more rural area?*
  4. **A:** NHPCO: It can be difficult due to the distance; you will likely have more luck with print media because they can do an interview over the phone. Again, anytime you have individual stories, pictures or quotes it makes it more likely that the story will get picked up. There are also backpack journalists who shoot and edit stories themselves and then have the ability to share them widely.
  5. **Q:** *We have heard of hospices draping an American flag over a deceased Veteran and we were wondering if there is a way to get some flags donated to our hospice?*
  6. **A:** NHPCO: If a patient is enrolled in the VA and receiving benefits then they might be eligible to receive a burial flag; you would need to contact your local VA for more details/logistics. Also contact your local Veteran Service Organizations (VFWs, DAVs, American Legions, etc...) because they have been known to donate flags on occasion. The last option would be to order the flags online through retailers such as Amazon, EBay, etc.
- **Success Stories**
    1. We sponsored a WWII Veteran on an **Honor Flight** and his son was his Guardian. We had pictures and both of our local newspapers picked up the story. The Veteran who went on the Honor Flight was contacted by another Veteran who read the story and they now meet regularly and are great friends.
      - NHPCO: Honor Flight is a great organization that flies WWII Veterans to the monuments in Washington, DC. Hosting a screening of *Honor Flight, the Movie* is also a great way to get the community engaged and possibly more media attention.
    2. We were that lucky hospice who was visited by ABC for a **Veterans Day** story and I just want to thank NHPCO for helping to make that happen. In conjunction with that story we pinned and gave certificates to 35 Veterans in Skilled Nursing Facilities; the patients were pinned by a Navy Reservist.
      - NHPCO: We are so glad that the Veterans Day piece came together and it was accomplished in large part due to how quickly your team was able to mobilize. Great to hear about your pinning ceremony, moving forward we hope to get some of those events videotaped.
    3. Many of the Veterans in our community and in our service want to give back and be as active as possible. We have a program that allows our Veterans to write **letters to active duty Veterans**, "We love our active duty Veterans!"

- NHPCO: This is just the kind of story that we want to highlight in our reaffirming hospice campaign for 2014. Please send us any details that you have.
- 4. Thank you for this call, we do a lot of events through **Spirit of '45** and while we get some media attention, this has given me some great ideas moving forward. One of the events we have done is a WWII remembrance ceremony for our entire community where people can come and share their stories of service and remembrance.
- 5. I spoke on a **radio show** about our Veterans work and the interviewer wanted to have a WWII Veteran on the show. We were able to identify a WWII Veteran who had fought in the Battle of the Bulge and they came to his home to interview him.

### **Spirit of '45**

Warren Hegg, Spirit of '45 National Director

- Spirit of '45 is a national day of remembrance (celebrated on the 2nd Sunday of August) to honor the legacy of the men and women of the WWII generation. In 2010, Congress unanimously voted in favor of a national "Spirit of '45 Day" to preserve and honor the legacy of the men and women of the World War II generation so that their example of national unity, shared sacrifice and service to community will continue to inspire future generations of Americans.
- One of our best *WHV* success stories has been the work of Michelle August who organized 12 Spirit of '45 events in Rhode Island with the help of her state's Hospice-Veteran Partnership (HVP). Michelle's work really shows that Spirit of '45 is a grassroots program that works from the bottom up.
- August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945 marks the end of World War II so we are making a big push for 2015 which will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. One way that hospices can get involved is by helping to organize a Spirit of '45 Day wreath laying ceremony honoring the members of the WWII generation in your community as part of the national cross country "Tribute to the Greatest Generation" that will begin at the National WWII Memorial in Washington, DC, and end in Punchbowl National Cemetery in Hawaii. If you are interested in participating, visit the Spirit of '45 [website](#) for more information.
- Spirit of '45 is having their annual National Leaders Conference in Sand Diego and there are some spots reserved for *WHV* Partners. If you have participated in a Spirit of '45 event and are interested in attending, please email [Linda@Spiritof45.org](mailto:Linda@Spiritof45.org) for details.
- Hospices have a unique opportunity to have the last conversation with members of the greatest generation. You can now say "there is a day for you and your service and sacrifice will be remembered." We want *WHV* Partners to participate so please go [online](#) or [email us](#) to get involved.
- **Spirit of '45 Best Practice from Michelle August, Beacon Hospice in East Providence, RI:** This past summer we organized several Spirit of '45 events but our main event was at the WWII Memorial in Providence, RI where we held a wreath laying ceremony and taps

was played by a bugler. Representatives from all kinds of organizations participated and we had some great media coverage along with a radio show interview!

### **Updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs**

Dr. Scott Shreve, VA Hospice & Palliative Care National Program Director

- Hello everyone, thank you for all of the work that you do and for sharing the wonderful stories of success that we have heard on today's call. I am happy to say that every VA Medical Center has a palliative care consult team and the best way to solve a problem is by working with these local teams and other community partnerships
- Hospice care is open access in the VA and every enrolled Veteran gets the benefit of this care whether it is provided by VA or by a community hospice.
- The VA sends a survey to the families of the 21,000 inpatient deaths. This year 86% of respondents rated the care of their loved one as excellent or very good. We also received the Circle of Life citation which is a huge honor.
- Although there are many great things happening, we are still experiencing late consults and are still trying to integrate palliative care into primary care clinics. We have a national initiative to train every primary care physician to have goals of care discussion and to talk about prognosis and possible utilization of palliative care and/or hospice.
- Another goal for this year is for the VA to learn to be better partners with the community and organizations such as hospices. VA facilities don't always know about HVPs so we want to better that.
- **Question and Answer Session**
  - **Q:** *I'm working with Honor Flight to be a guardian in 2014 and I need to raise money. Has anyone had any success with raising money for Honor Flight or do you have any suggestions from a VA standpoint?*
  - **A:** Dr. Shreve: VA employees are not permitted to raise money as a VA employee but they can do so on their own time.
  - **A:** NHPCO: Email us at [veterans@nhpco.org](mailto:veterans@nhpco.org) and we will get you in touch with someone who has had experience working with Honor Flight.

### **General Success Stories**

- We have a wonderful partnership with four other hospices and we all participated in the local **Stand Down** which was life changing. We also presented hospice care 101 at a local university course about wellness.
- We have been participating with **Quilts of Valor** which is an organization that gives quilts to returning combat Veterans. We have our first presentation on Monday.