

2011

Reaching Out: Quality Hospice and Palliative Care for Rural and Homeless Veterans

Base Year through Option Year Two
September 19, 2008 - September 19, 2011

Final Report



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Reaching Out:
Quality Hospice and Palliative Care for Rural and Homeless Veterans
2011 Final Report, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
(NHPCO)



Executive Summary: Reaching Out 2008 - 2011

From September 2008 to September 2011, NHPCO executed a contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to explore ways to improve access for homeless Veterans and Veterans in rural areas to quality end-of-life care. The initiative, entitled "Reaching Out: Quality Hospice and Palliative Care for Rural and Homeless Veterans," aimed to gain insight about the end-of-life care needs of these specific populations and then to implement community-based programs to address those needs.

Highlights of key innovations and successes include:

- **Reaching Out Model Programs** were developed by selected hospice providers to increase Veterans' access to hospice and palliative care services, with a special emphasis on those who are homeless and/or living in rural areas. These model programs are now being disseminated and available to hospice and palliative care providers nationally.
- **National Awareness Campaign**, named *We Honor Veterans (WHV)*, was created to engage and support hospice providers in better understanding and addressing Veterans' needs as they near the end of life. A major component of the campaign was the development of *WHV "Partners"*. As of November 21, 2011, there are 1070 community hospice providers and 20 state hospice organizations that are a *WHV* Partner.
- **New Website**, www.WeHonorVeterans.org, was developed and launched in October 2010 to support the goals of the *We Honor Veterans* campaign. Page views of the website's home page and other key webpages have totaled 196,789, as of November, 2011.
- **Strategic Communications Plan** was developed that focused on advancing the *WHV* goals in the hospice and palliative care community, and to the broader healthcare community and external audiences. This plan, fully realized in 2011, resulted in a total of 78 articles provided to NHPCO's hospice provider members and *WHV* Partners. News articles generated by NHPCO and other sources numbered well over 500 to audiences of over 350 million. In addition, seven national press releases and two audio press releases were disseminated by NHPCO to potential audiences of well over 51 million.
- **Sustainability Plan** was implemented to ensure the future financial viability of the *WHV* program. The initial goal for the three-year plan was exceeded with a total revenue of \$81,734.65. The popular Veteran Acknowledgment card, available for purchase from NHPCO's Marketplace, garnered sales of 16,614 cards for a total of \$39,354.

- **Veteran-Centric Education** was provided to enhance the ability of hospices to provide high quality services and care to Veterans. A total of twenty webinars, national conference sessions, state meeting presentations and other educational offerings were provided to 9,894 hospice professionals.
- **Family Evaluation of Hospice Care, Veterans Module** was developed in collaboration with VA, for use with NHPCO's Family Evaluation of Hospice Care (FEHC). FEHC is a post-death survey designed to yield actionable information that reflects the quality of hospice care delivery from the perspective of family caregivers. The FEHC Veterans Module (FEHC-V) is designed to be added to the FEHC survey and distributed to family caregivers of Veterans via hospice providers.

FEHC-V was launched in September 2011 and will be a major focus for **We Honor Veterans** efforts in 2012.

Vision for the Future

Throughout the Reaching Out project, there has been strong collaboration between NHPCO and VA staff in determining ways to ensure that Veterans receive the care and services they desire in the setting of their choice. While success has been significant, we are still in what should be considered early stages of this work.

Ongoing commitment and support will be required in order to sustain these efforts. Moving ahead and building on the initial success of the program, we offer these thoughts to sustain and motivate our plans for the future.

- **Sustainability** – Development staff have established a solid plan and are committed to raising the funds for continued growth and expansion. The plan includes annual solicitation appeals, grants from foundations, corporate partnerships and events. A Fall **WHV** Acquisition Mailing was sent to 50,000 individuals (from constituents identified who support veteran charities). The letter was an introduction to the WHV program and a general ask for support. The new donors who gave as a result of this mailing are now part of a stewardship plan to further engage their interest and support.

Staff are currently in negotiations with several corporate interests who want to support the WHV program. In addition, much work is going into incorporating support for WHV into existing events (Gala, Run to Remember, etc).

- **Staffing** – must be adequate to meet the needs of a rapidly-growing start-up campaign. NHPCO Leadership will monitor and adjust to ensure timely responses and assistance to Partners and other audiences, while maintaining a stable infrastructure.
- **VARRs** – In Option Year Two, five state hospice executives, known as Veteran Awareness Regional Representatives (VARRs) were identified;



selections were based on NHPCO's in-depth history with and knowledge of State Hospice Organization leadership with demonstrated capacity and commitment to support the requirements of the Reaching Out project. Primary functions of the VARRs were to provide technical assistance to the five Reaching Out grantees, act as the primary contact for VISN HPC Program Managers in their region, and collaborate with NHPCO staff to develop partnerships between community hospices, **WHV** Partners and local VAs and VISNs.

There were varying outcomes in the regions supported by the VARRs. NHPCO is continuing to review and evaluate the VARR or a similar position for the most effective and efficient means to provide this level of Partner support. It is imperative that anyone filling this role understand specific requirements to ensure ability and dedication to meeting commitments.

- **Mentoring** - has exponential value, as information alone does not change practice behaviors. Mentoring should continue - without question – as a means of providing guidance and technical assistance to those organizations seeking to enhance their care and services for Veterans. NHPCO fully supports this feedback from the VARRs and will explore the best means of providing mentoring to Partners. One option, proposed in the 2011 Audience Survey, is to cultivate Level Four Partners who wish to work with other WHV Recruits and Partners through email and phone support.
- **Relationship Building, Communication and Collaboration** - NHPCO is committed to working with community hospices and VA staff to ensure that cornerstones are strong, ensuring the continued success of the program. We will explore creative and innovative methods to take **WHV** beyond its current scope to the larger healthcare and Veteran Service Organization communities.
- **Family Evaluation of Hospice Care, Veterans Module** – NHPCO strongly encourages use of these surveys by **WHV** Partners and NHPCO members. Staff will continue to coordinate efforts with VA's Hospice and Palliative Care Program Office to share results of FEHC-V and VA's Bereaved Family Survey so that, ultimately, community hospice providers and VA facilities can provide quality, coordinated care for Veterans and their families.

Additional Insights and Recommendations for the Future are described [below](#).



Overview: Base Year, Option Years One and Two

Base Year Highlights

In September of 2008, NHPCO executed a contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), launching an initiative to provide homeless Veterans and Veterans in rural areas with access to quality end-of-life care. The initiative, entitled “Reaching Out: Quality Hospice and Palliative Care for Rural and Homeless Veterans,” aimed to gain insight about the end-of-life care needs of these specific populations and then to implement community-based programs to address those needs.

The contract was designed to:

1. Solicit proposals for innovative programs that foster VA collaboration with Hospice-Veteran Partnerships, state hospice organizations, State Veterans Homes, hospices and other providers of care and services for Veterans.
2. Provide recommendations to the VA Hospice and Palliative Care Program to improve outreach to Veterans and utilization of quality end-of-life care for rural and homeless Veterans at the close of each grant period, over three years.

In November of 2008, NHPCO released the request for proposals (RFP) for the “Reaching Out” grants. The programs who were awarded grants were to develop projects that could be sustainable and lend themselves to replication. In February of 2009, eighteen community hospice providers in fifteen states were awarded grants.

Base Year Outcomes

Project outcomes, reported by all eighteen grantees, highlighted increased awareness of Veterans’ needs, due to the establishment of partnerships between hospices and VA. The increased awareness, along with VA and hospice leaders’ increased knowledge about end-of-life concerns of rural and homeless Veterans, are the significant outcomes among “Reaching Out” programs that laid the foundation for access to end-of-life care for more Veterans.

As a result of the eighteen grantee communities’ heightened awareness of their local Veterans, Veterans’ needs, and the benefits to which Veterans are entitled,

project staff from each grantee program made efforts to implement practices resulting in positive programmatic changes, including:

- Increased utilization of the Military History Checklist by hospice providers
- Improved coordination of care among community providers and VA
- Better identification and tracking of homeless Veterans
- Increased use of technology to communicate with Veterans

This proactive approach and accommodation among partners did not come easily to grantees; most struggled to develop relationships between hospice providers, VA personnel and homeless shelter staff. Continued involvement and dedication to a common goal, however, fostered strong relationships that have become sustainable partnerships in the initiative to care for homeless and rural Veterans at the end of life.

A [complete report](#) of Reaching Out: Base Year activities and outcomes is available on the **WHV** website.

Option Year One Highlights

The second year of the contract, Option Year One, focused on the development and launch of the following:

- **National Awareness Campaign**, named ***We Honor Veterans (WHV)***, to engage and support hospice providers in better understanding and addressing Veterans' needs as they near the end of life.

In collaboration with NHPKO staff, NHPKO's Veterans Advisory Council and VA staff, [Free Range Studios](#) (selected through an RFP process) developed the Campaign strategy and messaging. Free Range staff conducted audience research in the form of a provider survey, focus groups, one-to-one interviews and online testing. Feedback from VA staff was requested throughout the process and integrated into the final product.

The "[WHV brand story](#)" encapsulates the key messages, intentions and sentiments of the campaign. Results of the online survey and other research are described in the [National Campaign Audience Research](#) section below.

A key component of the campaign was the development of ***We Honor Veterans*** "Partners". [Partners](#) are hospice providers that demonstrate a systematic commitment to improving care for Veterans. These organizations assess their ability to serve Veterans and, using [resources](#) provided as part

of the program, integrate best practices for providing end-of-life care to Veterans into their organization and within their community.

- **Veteran-centric Website**, www.WeHonorVeterans.org, that:
 1. Motivates hospice providers to declare their commitment to honoring Veterans
 2. Educates hospice providers on the needs of Veterans at the end of life
 3. Provides resources and tools to hospice providers so they can deliver the best support and care to Veterans at the end of life
 4. Increases the number of hospice providers that can demonstrate their commitment to providing care to Veterans at the end of life

- ***We Honor Veterans Campaign Development***

Planning and strategy development for the campaign was based on information gathered from an online survey of hospice providers and state hospice organizations, one-on-one interviews, focus groups and online testing, all to understand the unique needs of the hospice provider target audience and how the campaign might support providers in delivering enhanced care to Veterans and their families.

Additional supporting materials and resources developed for the campaign included:

- The design of a new **WHV** logo  WE HONOR VETERANS
- A tagline reflecting the campaign mission: ***Hospice Professionals on a Mission to Serve***
- A campaign [poster](#) and [informational brochure](#)

We Honor Veterans is a pioneering program that provides hospices, state hospice organizations, and Hospice Veteran Partnerships with tools and resources that encourage them to:

- Learn more about caring for Veterans
 - Declare a commitment to honoring Veterans at the end of life
 - Partner with VA at the local, regional and national level
 - Assess their current ability to serve Veterans
 - Provide education for hospice staff and volunteers
 - Measure quality and outcomes for continued improvement
- ***We Honor Veterans Campaign Launch***
After months of research and collaboration between [Free Range Studios](#), [NHPCO](#), the Veterans Advisory Council and [VA](#), ***We Honor Veterans*** was launched on September 12, 2010, during NHPCO's Clinical Team Conference

in Atlanta, GA. As part of the launch, NHPCO conducted a full-day seminar to promote the goals and resources for the new initiative.

The seminar, attended by almost 300 community and state hospice leaders along with leaders from Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and VA facilities across the country, provided participants with a first-hand review of the program goals, objectives, website, resources, “traveling” exhibit and promotional items.

Using a modified appreciative inquiry approach, attendees explored how to enhance the relationships between hospices and VA facilities across the United States.

Participants left the training with a completed, detailed action plan to improve care provided to Veterans in their hospice, state or VISN.

- **Best Practices in providing care to Veterans** were added to NHPCO’s 2010 revisions of the [Standards of Practice for Hospice Programs](#). The Standards are organized around the ten components of quality in hospice care, which provide a framework for developing and implementing Quality Assessment and Performance Improvement (QAPI) requirements under the Medicare Conditions of Participation (COPs). The Standards were revised and published in January, 2010. The Veteran-related Standards are available on the [WHV website](#).
- **Reaching Out Model Programs** developed by Option Year One grantees. These models, begun in the first year of the Reaching Out contract, were further developed and refined over the course of the year by six community hospice provider. The purpose of the models was to provide real-life examples of ways to enhance Veteran-centric education and partnerships between community providers and VA staff and facilities, and to increase Veterans’ access to hospice and palliative care services, with a special emphasis on those who are homeless and/or living in rural areas. A [description of the models](#) is available on the [WHV website](#).
- **Family Evaluation of Hospice Care, Veterans Module (FEHC-V)**. NHPCO’s [Family Evaluation of Hospice Care \(FEHC\)](#) is a post-death survey designed to yield actionable information that reflects the quality of hospice care delivery from the perspective of family caregivers. Hospices submitting FEHC data to NHPCO receive quarterly reports that include individual hospice results plus state and national results for comparison.

Initial planning and work on this module was begun by NHPCO’s Research Department during Option Year One. In a no-cost extension request, the deliverable date was extended to March, 2011, when an enhanced version of the FEHC was to be released, including the new Veterans Module.

Option Year One Outcomes

Option Year One was essential to establishing baselines for comparison with outcomes at the conclusion of the Reaching Out contract.

We Honor Veterans website was launched at the end of October 2010. From November 1 - 17, 2010, the top ten webpage views were:

Webpage	Page Views	Webpage	Page Views
Enroll Your Hospice	3006	WHV Partner Resources	1247
Home page	2775	Honoring Veterans	1158
Get Practical Resources	2135	Veterans and Their Needs	1064
Intake/Admission	1629	WHV Partner Levels	1049
Volunteer Programs	1297	Partner Level One	1006

Other statistics of interest include:

We Honor Veterans Partners (as of November 29, 2010):

- Email Contacts: 370 individuals in 46 states and DC
- Recruits: 175 community hospice providers in 42 states
- Level One: 4 community hospice providers (AZ, IA, TN, WV)

Technical assistance provided to the grantees by NHPCO staff:

- Level One: 4 agencies (AZ, IA, TN, WV)
- Monthly conference calls
- One in-person meeting (May 10-11, 2010)
- Hundreds of telephone and email exchanges

NHPCO’s Veterans Advisory Council reconvened after several years of inactivity, and met quarterly during 2010. Membership was composed of:

- VA staff: 4
- NHPCO staff: 6
- Representatives from community organizations : 10

Participants in educational sessions and meetings throughout the year*

- Hospice staff and volunteers: 1064
- Community members, including Veterans: 15,635
- VA staff: 149

**Note: There are gaps and inconsistencies in reports from which this information was gathered. NHPCO continues to refine reporting requirements to enable more detailed, relevant outcome measurement in the future.*

A [complete report](#) of Reaching Out: Option Year One activities and outcomes is available on the **WHV** website.

Option Year Two Highlights

The Statement of Work for the third year of the contract, "Option Year Two", included:

- Oversight of the national campaign established in Option Year One
- Promotion and dissemination of best practices in meeting Veterans' needs
- Providing resources, support and motivation for providers to engage in the campaign and to improve outreach and services to Veterans nearing life's end
- Selection, managing and reporting on five regional support representatives from the contractor's established geographic regions
- Selection, managing and reporting on five competitively selected proposals from community hospice organizations
- Providing recommendations for ways in which VA, in partnership with other providers, can improve outreach and increase utilization of quality end-of-life care for homeless Veterans and Veterans living in rural and highly rural areas.

Based on the stated goals, activities of Option Year Two focused on the following deliverables.

Strategic Communications

NHPCO developed and implemented a strategic communications plan focused on advancing the goals of the **We Honor Veterans** in the hospice and palliative care community, and to the broader healthcare community and external audiences.

Approaches utilized included:

- **NewsBriefs:** NHPCO's weekly e-newsletter which provides a snapshot of the relevant news, resources and news clips from the current week, with links for further reading.
- **NewsLine:** NHPCO's monthly membership magazine, with timely information and resources to help managers and staff meet their day-to-day

challenges.

- **Video clips:** Four posted in digital version of Facebook and YouTube.
- **National press releases:** Two.
- **Audio news release:** One.
- **Multi-media news release:** One.
- **Social Media postings:** Numerous, throughout the year.
- **Recruit/Partner Blast Emails:** Numerous, throughout the year.
- **My.NHPCO.org:** NHPCO's professional networking website allowing subscribers to share experiences and knowledge, and participate in end-of-life care discussions through blogging, document and resource sharing and eGroups (listserv). Though this is an NHPCO member benefit, the **We Honor Veterans** eGroup is open to all regardless of membership status.

Details are found in the Option Year Two Strategic Communications Outcomes [below](#).

We Honor Veterans Website

To support the goals of the **We Honor Veterans** program NHPCO launched a new website (www.WeHonorVeterans.org) in October, 2010, to:

- Motivate hospice providers to declare their commitment to honoring Veterans
- Educate hospice providers on the needs of Veterans at the end of life
- Provide resources and tools to hospice providers so they can provide the best support and care to Veterans at the end of life
- Increase the number of hospice providers that can demonstrate their commitment to providing care to Veterans at the end of life

The website provides a centralized location of extensive information about Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and downloadable practical information, resources, and tools focused on providing Veteran-centric education for hospice staff (clinical and administrative), and, by extension, Veterans in the community and other service and healthcare organizations.

Website sections of note are [Best Practices](#), [Updates](#), [Enroll Your Hospice](#), [Partner Resources](#) and [Partner Directory](#).

Partners

We Honor Veterans provides tiered recognition to State and local hospice organizations that demonstrate a systematic commitment to improving care for Veterans. Throughout [four Partner Levels](#), organizations assess their ability to serve Veterans and, using resources provided as part of the campaign, integrate best practices for providing end-of-life care to Veterans into their organization. Reports ([Level One example](#)) for each level enable the organization to document their activities leading to increasing levels of commitment. Each Level has three major components:

1. Education: for hospice staff, volunteers, Veterans, community, other healthcare providers
2. Organizational Policies and Procedures: fully integrating Veteran-centric care into the organization's policies, procedures and systems
3. Hospice-Veteran Partnerships: collaboration with other community providers, state hospice organizations, VA facilities and VA staff

By becoming a **We Honor Veterans** Partner, hospices can be better prepared to:

1. Build professional and organizational capacity to provide quality care for Veterans
2. Develop and/or strengthen partnerships with VA and other Veteran organizations
3. Increase access to hospice and palliative care for Veterans in their community
4. Network with other hospices across the country to learn about best practice models

The primary goals of each Partner level are described below:

- [Recruit](#): Get oriented and commit to the **We Honor Veterans** program
- [Level 1](#): Provide Veteran-centric education for staff and volunteers, and identify patients with military experience
- [Level 2](#): Build organizational capacity to provide quality care for Veterans
- [Level 3](#): Develop and strengthen relationships with VA medical centers and other Veteran organizations
- [Level 4](#): Increase access and improve quality of care for Veterans in your community

Local and State Hospice organizations “earn their stars” and matching logo by completing activities for each of the four levels of commitment. This enables VA staff and Veterans to easily identify hospices that have made a commitment to offer

Veteran-specific care and services provided by a competent and highly skilled workforce.

As a Partner, hospices may promote their level of commitment to Veterans by displaying the ***We Honor Veterans*** Partner logo on their websites, as well as supporting community outreach and distributing educational materials.

FEHC-V

In collaboration with VA, NHPCO developed a Veterans module for use with the Family Evaluation of Hospice Care (FEHC). FEHC is a post-death survey designed to yield actionable information that reflects the quality of hospice care delivery from the perspective of family caregivers. Hospices that submit FEHC data to NHPCO receive quarterly reports that present FEHC survey results, which hospices can use in their quality performance improvement initiatives.

The FEHC Veterans module (FEHC-V) is designed to be added to the FEHC survey and distributed to family caregivers of Veterans. Results from the questions in FEHC-V, in combination with the results from the basic survey, will allow hospices to evaluate care delivered to Veterans.

The availability of the FEHC-V was announced during the webinar “Understanding VA’s End of Life Care Initiative and NHPCO’s FEHC Veterans Module,” on May 17, 2011, presented by VA and NHPCO staff. The session included a detailed description of the module, its relation to the FEHC, and how Partners at Level Four were expected to utilize the questions and their results in a Performance Improvement Project.

The online version of FEHC-V was officially posted on NHPCO’s website on September 19, 2011 and is available to hospice provider members and ***WHV*** Partners.

Veteran-centric Education

One of the primary deliverables for 2011 was to create and update educational materials and resources that enhance the ability of hospices to provide high quality services to Veterans.

- Seven complimentary Webinars were presented, with an eighth one planned during the 1st quarter of 2012.
- Three Partner Networking Calls in June, July and August to provide opportunities for Partners to share best practices. A fourth call is planned

during the 1st quarter of 2012.

- Six online courses were developed and are available at no charge through NHPCO's [End-of-Life Online](#) website.
- Nine Veteran-centric presentations were provided by NHPCO staff, **WHV** Partners, VA staff other healthcare organization staff during NHPCO's national leadership and clinical team conferences and at other healthcare and state organization meetings.
- Two Vet-to-Vet PowerPoint presentations were adapted from previously developed materials, speaker notes were added and the presentations posted on the website.
- One instructor-led online course, in collaboration with the National Center for Death Education at Mt. Ida College, Newton, MA.

VARRs

NHPCO selected a Veteran Awareness Regional Representative (VARR) for each of the five established NHPCO geographic regions. Selections were based on NHPCO's in-depth history with and knowledge of State Hospice Organization leadership with demonstrated capacity and commitment to support the requirements of the Reaching Out project. The VARRs included:

- **Jamey Boudreaux**, Louisiana-Mississippi Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- **Jennifer Eurek**, Nebraska Hospice and Palliative Care Association
- **Anne Koepsell**, Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- **Jeff Lycan**, Midwest Care Alliance, OH
- **Kandyce Powell**, Maine Hospice Council and Center for End-of-Life Care

Primary functions of the VARRs were to provide technical assistance to the five Reaching Out grantees, act as the primary contact for VISN HPC Program Managers in their region, and collaborate with NHPCO staff to develop partnerships between community hospices, **WHV** Partners and local VAs and VISNs.

VARRs participated in monthly calls with NHPCO staff, grantees and VA staff to review grantee progress and outcomes, provide ongoing support, problem resolution, assistance and insights into best practices for promoting the goals of the program. They were also instrumental in developing the agenda and presentations



for the face-to-face meeting with grantees and the “Conversations in Collaboration” Summit in San Diego.

NHPCO and the VARRs developed an overview evaluating the effectiveness and viability of the position for the future. Details are included in the Option Year Two Outcomes [below](#).

Audience/Partner Research

2010 Survey – Pre-Campaign Research

In 2010, NHPCO retained [Free Range Studios](#) to develop the creative components for the ***We Honor Veterans*** campaign (messaging, new website, and printed collateral materials) and was also tasked with conducting an initial phase of audience research to better understand how hospice providers were currently caring for Veterans.

Two online surveys were distributed via email to 33,000 NHPCO members and 87 representatives from state hospice organizations. The surveys, which were administered through the online tool Survey Monkey (from 2/26/10 to 3/4/10), covered issues including:

- The extent to which hospices and state organizations are aware of Veterans receiving care
- The Veteran-specific programs and procedures hospices already use
- Use of Veteran-specific resources on the NHPCO website
- What training materials hospice care providers desire
- The online and information-seeking behaviors of hospice staff

A total of 1,296 individuals completed the online survey. Highlights from the results include:

- 94% provide care to Veterans
- 43% have Veteran-specific programs/procedures in place and “treat Veterans just like all patients”
- 81% have coordinated Veteran benefits through VA
- 41% experienced coordination of Veteran benefits as difficult

Key findings from the online survey include:

1. There is confusion around the words “Veteran” and “programs and procedures for Veterans.”
2. Hospices are not necessarily motivated to care for Veterans because it is good for business or because of outside pressure from state organizations; rather, they feel it is the right thing to do.



3. Most hospices are determining whether patients are Veterans at intake; virtually no providers are using the Military History Checklist.
4. Everyone wants more training and they want to complete their training online when it's convenient for them.
5. A perk of the "Reaching Out" grant program (Base Year) is the higher level of awareness it gave to Veteran end-of-life care issues.

Based on their findings, Free Range provided recommendations for the **We Honor Veterans** campaign.

1. Messages about Veterans as part of the community and the importance of honoring and providing a dignified end-of-life experience to these men and women are more likely to resonate.
2. Develop a smart, effective promotional strategy for the e-learning modules and the training resources on the new **We Honor Veterans** website.
3. Leveraging email effectively to communicate around the **We Honor Veterans** campaign will be key.
4. Coordinate the integration of the Military History Checklist to intake forms with software providers.
5. Establishing relationships between hospice providers and VA facilities is key for the **We Honor Veterans** campaign to be successful.

To review the specific findings of the 2010 provider survey, refer to the **We Honor Veterans** [Campaign Audience Research Report](#).

2011 Survey - We Honor Veterans After One Year

In August 2011, Free Range Studios distributed an online survey via email to 33,000 NHPCO members. A series of 12 one-on-one interviews was also conducted with hospice care professionals, augmenting data with nuanced qualitative findings.

The research finds that **We Honor Veterans** is off to a strong start in its first year. Its core audience, hospice and palliative care professionals who belong to NHPCO, is aware of the program and hundreds of organizations have signed on as Partners. Survey respondents are grateful that their eyes are now open to this topic and look to NHPCO to provide further guidance, resources and support.

This second survey and interviews aimed to answer six questions. An overview of the findings is found in the Option Year Two Outcomes section [below](#).

We Honor Veterans Summit

Concurrent with NHPCO's 12th Clinical Team Conference (CTC), October 6-8, 2011, in San Diego, CA, the one-day Summit entitled "Conversations in Collaboration" was a complimentary, full-day program that provided participants with:

- Specific **We Honor Veterans** partner successes and plans for the future

- Strategies for implementing model programs from programs which are successfully implementing these strategies
- Updates from VA on current and new hospice and palliative care initiatives
- Tools, resources and best practices for serving Veterans
- Insights from and networking time with Veteran Awareness Regional Representatives and VA staff
- Opportunities to discuss your strategies for serving Veterans

Participants from across the country, including VA staff and State Hospice Organization leaders gathered to hear the latest about **We Honor Veterans**, join discussions and network with their peers with the common goal of enhancing the quality of end-of-life care provided to Veterans in their communities.

A networking breakfast the following morning highlighted the **WHV** program.

National Awards

VA Recognized for Efforts to Improve Care for Dying

In April, 2011, the [National Hospice Foundation](#) presented its Global Vision Award to the Veterans Health Administration for its groundbreaking efforts to improve end-of-life care for all Veterans through the **WHV** Campaign.

The [Global Vision Award](#) recognizes the efforts of an individual or organization whose dedication and innovation to program development and delivery profoundly affects the care and well-being of people around the world. Awardees demonstrate an extraordinary vision for caring that has a far-reaching impact and creates a lasting change in communities. The Global Vision Award celebrates efforts to harness innovation, raise the potential of human endeavors, and leverage resources to improve caring.

We Honor Veterans Partner Awards

WHV Partner Awards were established to recognize the exemplary work of organizations that demonstrate leadership and significantly contribute to the development of quality care for Veterans. The inaugural **WHV** Partner Awards in October, 2011, recognized outstanding achievement in the categories of Partnerships, Innovation and Sustainability.

A description of the programs receiving the awards is found in the Option Year Two Outcomes section [below](#).

State Hospice Organization Surveys

In the spring of 2011, NHPCO and VA staff agreed to develop a survey to characterize and benchmark the business relationships between community hospices and VA medical centers. State Hospice Organizations now have the opportunity to participate in this national online survey. As of November 18, nineteen states have invited hospices in their state to participate by sending them a state-specific link to the survey.

Findings from the survey will be compiled into a succinct report and forwarded to each state for distribution to their membership. The report may be used by NHPCO, and local, regional and state Hospice-Veteran Partnerships to develop tools, resources and educational materials focused on quality care for Veterans. Additionally, participating in the survey will help the State Hospice Organizations complete a Level Three activity.

Sustainability

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and the National Hospice Foundation (NHF) are fully committed to ensuring the ongoing viability of ***We Honor Veterans***.

For Option Year Two, as outlined in the Project Management Plan, NHPCO and NHF team objectives in sustainability efforts included:

- Utilize existing infrastructure to raise funds in support of programs.
- Conduct a direct mail appeals to raise funds and awareness for Veteran programs.
- Establish a loyal and supportive constituency to provide future funding.
- Attend NHPCO conferences, state-sponsored meetings and other relevant conferences to raise awareness of and support for the Veterans program.
- Provide a basic kit of materials to all hospices committing as ***WHV*** Partners.
- Other measures as determined essential.

Intended outcomes included:

- Attract the attention of new philanthropic sources to Veterans issues.
- Increase NHF's database of supporters of Veterans issues.
- Increase number of future grants in support of the Veterans program.
- Consistent integration of care for Veterans into hospice services.

Option Year Two Outcomes

The Option Year Two deliverables built extensively on the activities and outcomes of the two previous years, with more in-depth involvement of NHPCO staff, increased interaction with VA staff, and enhanced technical assistance for grantees through a newly developed group of five Veteran Awareness Regional Representatives (VARRs).

Strategic Communications

The strategic communications plan focused on advancing the **WHV** goals in the hospice and palliative care community, and to the broader healthcare community and external audiences.

National Press Releases

The following national press releases were distributed:

- [Veterans Day: Honoring America's Veterans Includes Caring at Life's End](#) (11/07/11)
- [We Honor Veterans Honors Outstanding Hospice Partners Serving Veterans](#) (10/20/11)
- [Awards Presented at National Summit in San Diego](#) (10/5/11)
- [VA Recognized for Efforts to Improve Care for Dying](#) (4/16/11)
- [NHPCO Congratulates We Honor Veterans Grant Recipients for 2011](#) (01/25/11)
- [It's Never too Late to Say 'Thank You' to Our Nation's Veterans: Even at the End of Life](#) (11/09/10)
- [We Honor Veterans Campaign Website Launch](#) (10/26/10)

NewsBriefs

NewsBriefs articles were published throughout the year about the **WHV** website, Partner activities, educational offerings, updated resources, and other related program information.

Articles were published on each of these dates in 2010: 10/28, 11/04, 11/10, 12/16, 12/22.

Articles were published on each of these dates in 2011: 01/06, 01/20, 01/27, 02/03, 02/10, 02/17, 03/03, 03/10, 03/17, 03/24, 03/31, 04/07, 04/21, 04/28, 05/05, 05/12, 05/19, 05/26, 06/02, 06/09, 06/16, 06/30, 07/07, 07/14, 08/04, 08/11, 08/18, 09/08, 09/15, 09/22, 10/06, 10/13, 10/20, 10/27, 11/18.

NewsLine

December 2010: featuring **WHV** website, Becoming a **WHV** Partner, Partner Resources, and Marketplace Resources.

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201012/#/12

January 2011: page 11, recap of 2010 activities by NHPKO, with mention of Reaching Out in the Access category. Thumbnail of **WHV** website.

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201101/#_0

February 2011: article about CA hospice recognition of Veterans Day, **WHV** website listed. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201102/#_0

March 2011: page 20, Reaching Out 2011 Grant Recipients, page 36, Hospice Unit in OH State Veterans Home.

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201103/#/0

April 2011: page 32, One Bike One Cause – One Uplifting Journey, page 42, Runner's Endurance Challenge for Veterans' Hospice Care.

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201104/#/0

May 2011: Don Schumacher Interview with "Harvest" (movie) director, mention of **We Honor Veterans** and impact of military experiences on Veterans

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201105/#/34

June 2011: Walkathon to Promote "Dying Well," benefiting **We Honor Veterans**
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201106/index.php?startid=31&qs=Veteran#/30

June 2011: Becoming a **WHV** Partner. Also link to Deborah Grassman's plenary presentation at NHPKO's 2010 Clinical Team Conference. **WHV** Recruit/Partner statistics. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201106/index.php?startid=32&qs=Veteran#/32

June 2011: Opportunity to Recognize Veterans Every Day

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201106/index.php?startid=31&qs=Veteran#/40

July 2011: Five Tips to Support Those Who've Lost a Loved One in Service to our Country. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201107/#/46

July 2011: The Sparkling New Venue at National Harbor, MD was a Hit. Mention of VA receiving the Global Vision Award for their support of **We Honor Veterans**.

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201107/#/40

August 2011: *We Honor Veterans* Marketplace advertisement
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201108/#/36

August 2011: NHPCO, NHF and FHSSA Staff to Hit the Streets on July 1 – With Joyce Michael. Mention of Joyce Michael’s walk to raise money for *We Honor Veterans*.
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201108/#/48

September 2011: Hospice Program in the Continuum: The Transitions Program at Redmond-Sisters Hospice. Mention of Redmond-Sisters Hospice’s *We Honor Veterans* efforts.
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201109/#/24

September 2011: Two Very “Hip” Events Raise Funds for Hospice. Mention of fundraiser benefiting *We Honor Veterans*.
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201109/#/36

October 2011: *We Honor Veterans* Marketplace advertisement
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201110/#/14

October 2011: Serving Veterans - Understanding and Navigating the VA System. Summary of resources on the *We Honor Veterans* website.
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201110/#/32

October 2011: To celebrate her 60th birthday and raise awareness about hospice, Joyce Michael designed Project 22 and walked 484 kilometers throughout the summer. A note about Joyce Michael’s walk to raise money for *We Honor Veterans*:
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nhpc/newsline_201110/#/42.

Social Media

NHPCO staff established *WHV* Facebook and Twitter pages, with periodic postings highlighting tips, tools, news stories and more.

- **Facebook**
Facebook Likes: 348
Facebook Posts: 25
Videos Posted on Facebook: 4
<http://www.facebook.com/wehonorveterans>
- **Twitter**
Twitter Followers: 281
Twitter Postings: 87
<http://twitter.com/WeHonorVeterans>

WHV Emails

Recruits and Partners were sent frequent targeted emails:

- February Webinar - 2/10/11
- March Webinar - 3/7/11NHF Global Vision Announcement - 3/31/11
- April Webinar - 4/5/11
- Email encouraging Recruits to become Partners – May 2, 2011
- Email encouraging email list to become Recruits – May 9, 2011
- Webinar Announcement – May 10, 2011
- Memorial Day Announcement – May 19, 2011
- Memorial Day Letter to Editor Announcement – May 24, 2011
- Updated Partner Level Report Announcement – May 27, 2011
- Partner Networking Call Announcement – June 10, 2011
- Partner Networking Call Announcement - July 7, 2011
- Partner Networking Call Announcement - August 2, 2011
- CTC Summit and **WHV** Breakfast Invitation - August 9, 2011
- **WHV** Survey to All Members - August 23, 2011
- **WHV** Partner Award Nominations - August 23, 2011
- **WHV** Stipend Announcement - August 24, 2011
- Updates from **We Honor Veterans** - August 25, 2011
- **WHV** Summit and National Partner Awards - September 7, 2011
- Announcement of **We Honor Veterans** Summit - September 12, 2011
- Webinar Announcement - September 12, 2011
- Webinar Announcement - October 2, 2011
- Webinar Announcement (2nd) - October 14, 2011
- FEHC Veterans (FEHC-V) Module Announcement - October 31, 2011
- FEHC Veterans (FEHC-V) Module Availability - November 18, 2011

We Honor Veterans - News Postings

Statistics on news articles were collected by NHPCO's tracking service:

April – June, 2011

- NHPCO-generated: 12
- Partners: 11
- Letters to Editor: 2
- NHPCO Memorial Day release: 215

July – October, 2011 enhanced tracking statistics

Timeframe	Number of Articles	Circulation: Unique Visitors
July, 2011	35	27,630,993
August, 2011	7	74,148.00
September, 2011	118	97,802,198
October, 2011	194	129,537,909
November 1-15, 2011	142	99,968,590
Total	496	355,013,838

Audio and Multi-Media Press Releases

NHPCO contracted with MultiVu to develop audio and Multi-Media press releases.

The audio was released on September 30, 2011, with these results:

NATIONAL RADIO NETWORK FEEDS:

Source	Air Date/Feed Date	Affiliates/Airings	Audience
Westwood One Affiliates (CBS)	09/30/2011	1,574	16,024,000
Cumulus Media Networks	09/30/2011	2,900	24,265,000
Potential Total Network Affiliates/Airings:			4,474
Potential Total Network Audience:			40,289,000

CONFIRMED CUME AIRINGS:

Source	Air Date/Feed Date	Affiliates/Airings	Audience
Business Talk Radio	10/03/2011	185	18,194,117
USA Radio	10/03/2011	686	6,581,682
Network Affiliate	09/29/2011	31	6,205,082
Total Number of Stations Airings:			902
Total Audience:			30,980,881

CONFIRMED AQH AIRINGS:

Source	Air Date/Feed Date	Affiliates/Airings	Audience
Business Talk Radio	10/03/2011	185	3,093,000
USA Radio	10/03/2011	686	1,118,886
Network Affiliate	09/29/2011	31	1,054,864
Total Number of Stations Airings:			902
Total Audience:			5,266,750

The Multimedia segment, released on November 7, 2011, is summarized here:

Page Views: 7,548
 Online Video Views: 17,060
 File Downloads: 81
 Photo Archive Impressions: 156
 Total Web Samples: 62
 Web Samples Audience: 15,578,762
 Web Samples Value: \$1,278,066

Notably, 62 websites actually put the video on their sites which has an estimated value of \$1.2 million, excellent exposure for the **We Honor Veterans** program.

Review the [Multi-Media release](#) here.

Its message was "**We Honor Veterans**: Hospices on a mission to serve those who served us."



On Veterans Day, November 11, 2011, on the jumbo-tron in Times Square, this photo and message played 15 seconds, every 72 minutes.



The photo and message were similarly displayed in a prominent location in Las Vegas.

YouTube Videos

On Veterans Day, 2011, *We Honor Veterans* posted three YouTube videos featuring Veteran stories recorded by two Partner hospices with flip cameras provided by NHPCO staff. Watch WWII Veteran, [Paul Ernst](#), and Vietnam Veteran, [Robert Grimsbo](#), tell their combat stories. You can also watch the Veteran Recognition Ceremony for WWII Veteran [Ruth Lorraine Chase](#).

Total Number of YouTube videos: 4

Total number of Views: 1,598 as of 11/22/2011

<http://www.youtube.com/user/NationalHospice>

My.NHPCO (NHPCO's networking community) for *WHV*

Throughout 2011, discussions were generated by NHPCO and subscribers, generally about getting started with *WHV* activities, how to use the Military History Checklist, Best Practices, etc. Responses were made by NHPCO staff and/or *WHV* Partners.

My.NHPCO Subscribers: 276

My.NHPCO Postings: 83

<http://my.nhpco.org/eGroups/VeteranseGroup/>

We Honor Veterans Website

In 2010, before the *We Honor Veterans* website launched, survey participants (see Free Range Studios, Audience Research section of this report) were asked whether they had visited the NHPCO website to access content about end-of-life care for Veterans. 15% out of 1,275 respondents answered affirmatively.

In the 2011 survey, 62% of respondents said they have visited the *WHV* website and are using it as a resource. Most visits are by self-motivated professionals seeking answers to questions about Veteran care.

Survey results indicate that email continues to play an important role in promoting the website; a quarter of respondents to the question visit the *WHV* site when they

get email from NHPCO regarding the program or resources on the site.

In the same survey, when asked what resources they recalled being available on the website, responses included:

- A program for enrolling to be a We Honor Veteran program: 55%
- Information about Hospice-Veteran Partnerships: 53%.
- Resources for hospice professionals: 52%
- Information and access to the Military History Checklist: 50%
- Veteran appreciation products: 46%
- Announcements about campaign news: 46%
- Support for Hospice-Veteran Partnerships: 44%
- PowerPoints on Veteran care: 42%
- Campaign communication materials: 41%
- Information about Veterans: 38%

NHPCO has received consistently good feedback about the information and resources provided on the website. Staff maintains and updates the website based on feedback from NHPCO and VA staff, and other users. Particular attention is paid to the [Best Practices](#), [Updates](#), [Enroll Your Hospice](#) and [Partner Directory](#) sections.

See the Strategic Communications section of this report for a listing of the press releases posted on the site throughout the year.

Top Webpage Views, October 2010 – November 2011

Webpage	Total Page Views	Webpage	Total Page Views
Home Page	66,206	Partner Level One	11,518
Get Practical Resources	25,229	WHV Partner Directory	11,221
Enroll Your Hospice	22,414	Intake/Admission	11,202
WHV Partner Resources	17,784	Honoring Veterans	9,711
Volunteer Programs	12,176	Veterans and Their Needs	9,328

With funding for the **WHV** campaign decreasing for the immediate future, the website will continue to be a key resource for Partners and a primary communication vehicle for the program.



Partners

NHPCO Membership

NHPCO membership is not a requirement to participate as a Recruit or Partner. All information and resources are available to any user at no charge. Out of a total of 1090 Recruits and Partners, 236 are not NHPCO members.

The increase in number of Recruits and Partners since the program launch in September 2010 has more than exceeded initial expectations. The following charts illustrate statistics by various categories as of November 21, 2011.

Total Recruits/Partners, by Community and State

Type	Recruit	LVL 1	LVL 2	LVL 3	LVL 4	Total
Community	726	245	56	35	8	1070
State	14	4	2	0	0	20
Totals	740	249	58	35	8	1090

Total Recruits/Partners, by Top Ten States

State	Recruit	LVL 1	LVL 2	LVL 3	LVL 4	Total
Totals	740	249	58	35	8	1,090
CA	37	16	4	2	0	59
PA	41	12	2	3	0	58
MO	36	9	3	0	0	48
LA	35	7	4	1	0	47
GA	32	7	3	3	1	46
MI	31	10	0	2	0	43
TX	32	7	2	1	0	42
AL	32	6	1	0	0	39
OH	19	11	3	3	2	38
MN	30	7	0	0	0	37

Total Recruits/Partners, Alphabetically by State

State	RECRUIT	LVL1	LVL2	LVL3	LVL4	Total	State	RECRUIT	LVL1	LVL2	LVL3	LVL4	Total
All	740	249	58	35	8	1,090							
AL	32	6	1	0	0	39	MT	6	3	1	0	0	10
AR	7	6	0	1	0	14	NC	21	6	1	0	0	28
AZ	11	4	2	1	0	18	ND	6	0	0	0	0	6
CA	37	16	4	2	0	59	NE	9	6	2	1	0	18
CO	18	1	3	0	1	23	NH	2	2	0	0	0	4
CT	2	3	0	0	0	5	NJ	12	3	1	0	1	17

DC	2	0	0	0	0	2	NM	16	5	0	0	0	21
DE	5	0	0	1	0	6	NV	3	1	0	0	0	4
FL	16	7	4	1	2	30	NY	19	5	1	1	0	26
GA	32	7	3	3	1	46	OH	19	11	3	3	2	38
HI	3	0	0	1	0	4	OK	10	5	2	0	0	17
IA	15	5	1	1	0	22	OR	11	6	2	2	0	21
ID	13	3	2	1	0	19	PA	41	12	2	3	0	58
IL	20	4	1	2	0	27	RI	2	0	0	0	0	2
IN	16	6	1	0	0	23	SC	21	9	1	0	0	31
KS	19	5	0	0	0	24	SD	5	1	0	0	0	6
KY	4	4	0	1	0	9	TN	15	3	4	0	0	22
LA	35	7	4	1	0	47	TX	32	7	2	1	0	42
MA	12	3	3	1	0	19	UT	6	4	0	0	1	11
MD	10	2	0	1	0	13	VA	17	12	2	1	0	32
ME	4	1	0	0	0	5	VT	0	1	0	0	0	1
MI	31	10	0	2	0	43	WA	14	12	0	0	0	26
MN	30	7	0	0	0	37	WI	9	7	0	1	0	17
MO	36	9	3	0	0	48	WV	7	6	2	2	0	17
MS	22	4	0	0	0	26	WY	5	2	0	0	0	7

State Hospice Organization Recruits/Partners

Organization	State	Status
California Hospice and Palliative Care Association	CA	LVL1
Florida Hospices & Palliative Care, Inc.	FL	RECRUIT
Georgia Hospice & Palliative Care Organization	GA	LVL1
Hospice & Palliative Care Association of New York State	NY	RECRUIT
Hospice & Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts	MA	RECRUIT
Hospice & Palliative Care Network of Maryland	MD	RECRUIT
Indiana Association for Home & Hospice Care	IN	RECRUIT
Indiana Hospice and Palliative Care Organization	IN	RECRUIT
Kokua Mau: Hawai'i Hospice and Palliative Care Organization	HI	RECRUIT
Louisiana - Mississippi Hospice and Palliative Care Organization	LA	LVL2
Maine Hospice Council, DBA Maine Center for End-of-Life Care	ME	RECRUIT
Minnesota Network of Hospice & Palliative Care	MN	LVL1
Nebraska Hospice and Palliative Care Association	NE	LVL2
New Jersey Hospice & Palliative Care Organization	NJ	RECRUIT
Oregon Hospice Association/Hospice of Oregon	OR	RECRUIT
Tennessee Hospice Organization	TN	RECRUIT
Virginia Association for Hospices & Palliative Care	VA	RECRUIT
Washington State Hospice & Palliative Care Organization	WA	LVL1
West Virginia Hospice Council	WV	RECRUIT
Wyoming Hospice Organization	WY	RECRUIT

As Partners progress from Recruit through Level Four, one of the main goals is to provide Veteran-centric education within the organization and throughout the larger healthcare community. NHPCO staff calculated the number of presentations and

participants based on completed activity reports from campaign launch through 2011.

Audience	Presentations	Participants
Hospice Staff / Volunteer	562	21,484
Community	166	11,865
VA Staff	84	770
Totals	812	34,119

Partner Networking Calls

NHPCO staff hosted these calls in June, July and August, facilitating discussions with Recruits and Partners to:

- Promote innovative strategies and best practices
- Extend the reach of the **WHV** campaign
- Help hospices enhance staff education
- Enhance relationships between Partners and VA

Best Practices shared during Partner Networking Calls were documented and posted on the **WHV** website, and can be accessed using the links (by month) below.

Partner Networking Call	Registrants
June Best Practices	154
July Best Practices	105
August Best Practices	220

FEHC - V

Due to unexpected delays by NHPCO's vendor that developed and maintains the web-based data collection pages for FEHC-V, there was limited time for Partner participation in the last two weeks of 3rd Quarter, 2011, with five agencies posting 44 survey results.

Some Partners began using a manual process for collecting the updated survey following the May rollout. One of the first to achieve Level Four identified families of Veterans, called and interviewed them by phone, and used the results to develop a Performance Improvement Plan.

In 2012, NHPCO expects to conduct listening sessions with Partners using FEHC-V, to learn more about their experience of the process, survey questions, family

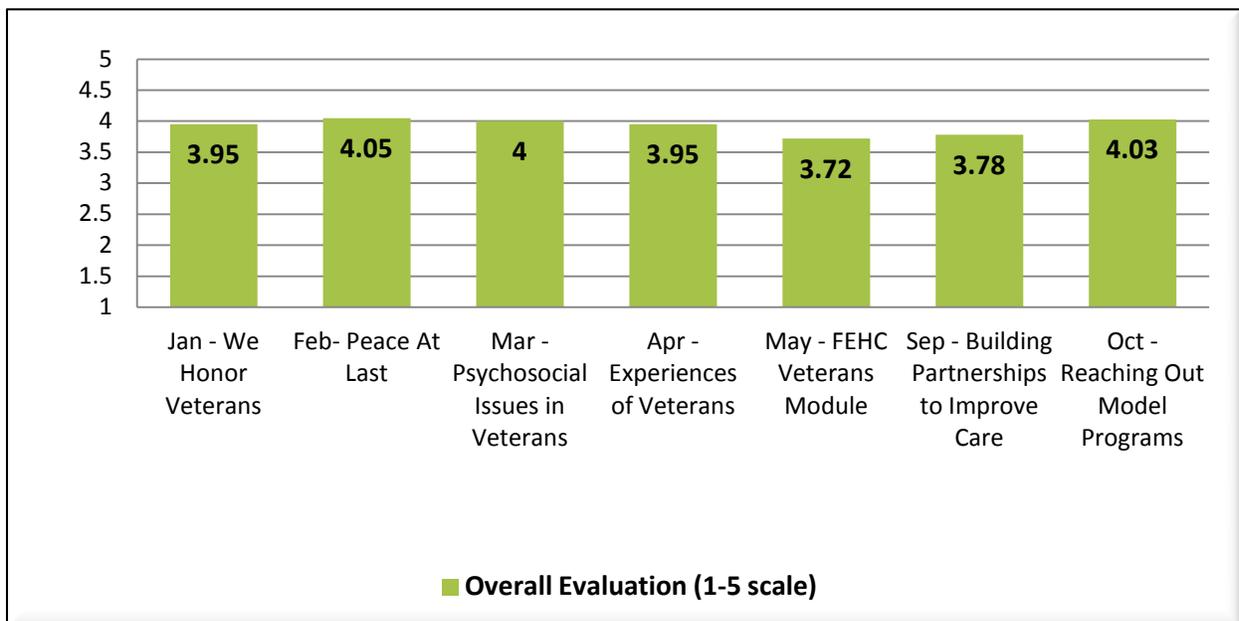
feedback and related issues. Initial results from last quarter of 2011 will be published and shared with VA, continuing conversations about comparison of FEHC-V and VA's Bereaved Family Survey results and improving the quality of care provided to Veterans.

As FEHC-V is a major focus for **We Honor Veterans** in 2012, Partners and NHPCO members will receive regular email reminders about the availability of FEHC-V and assistance provided to any Partner requesting it from NHPCO's Research Department.

Veteran-centric Education

2011 We Honor Veteran Webinars

These charts illustrate the participant evaluations of each webinar and the number of sites registered for the session.





Based upon NHPCO's analysis of historic data submitted by webinar participants, the average number of participants per site is eight.

Veteran-centric Presentations

These presentations were delivered by NHPCO staff, *WHV* Partners, VA staff, and other healthcare organizations at NHPCO and other conferences.

- ***We Honor Veterans: The Campaign and Website***, Minnesota Hospice Veteran Partnership, St. Cloud, MN, October 19, 2011, Emil Zuberbueler
- ***Creating a Veteran-Centric Culture***, National Association of State Veterans Homes, Alexandria, Virginia, March 1, 2011, Emil Zuberbueler and Scott Shreve, DO
- ***Hospice Veteran Partnerships: Secrets to Success***, NHPCO Management and Leadership Conference, National Harbor, MD, April 7, 2011, Deborah Grassman
- ***We Honor Veterans: A National Awareness and Action Campaign***, NHPCO Management and Leadership Conference, National Harbor, MD, April 8, 2011, Gwynn Sullivan and Emil Zuberbueler
- ***Education and Practical Resources to Enhance Care of Veterans with Life-Limiting Illness***, NHPCO Clinical Team Conference, San Diego, CA, October 7, 2011, Pam Malloy, Deborah Grassman, Michelle Gabrielle and Emil Zuberbueler

- ***We Honor Veterans***, NHPCO Clinical Team Conference, San Diego, CA, October 7, 2011, Kathryn Smith and Miriam Morrison
- ***We Honor Veterans***, The Carolinas Center 500—35th Annual Meeting, Concord, NC, September 25, 2011, Emil Zuberbueler
- ***We Honor Veterans***, Indiana Hospice – Veteran Partnership, Carmel, IN, November 10, 2011, Emil Zuberbueler
- ***We Honor Veterans***, House Veterans Committee, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC November 14, 2011, Emil Zuberbueler, Christie Franklin, Karen Leithner

Online Courses

These courses were developed by NHPCO and VA staff, utilizing existing PowerPoints and resources. They are posted to NHPCO's education webpage for convenient viewing by hospice and other healthcare staff. All courses are free of charge.

- Basic Training for Understanding VA
- Veteran Benefits
- Building a Veteran-Centric Culture
- Homelessness in Veteran Population
- Service-related Health Issues in Veterans
- Hospice-Veteran Partnership Programs

Visit NHPCO's e-online [WHV webpage](#) for access to these courses.

Partner Networking Calls

As referenced above, NHPCO staff hosted these calls, facilitating discussions with Recruits and Partners to:

- promote innovative strategies and best practices
- extend the reach of the **WHV** campaign
- help hospices enhance staff education
- enhance relationships between Partners and VA

Best Practices shared during Partner Networking Calls were documented and posted on the **WHV** website, and can be accessed using the links below.

Following each of the calls, participants were sent a survey to evaluate and provide additional comments.

Partner Networking Call	Registrants	Respondents to Survey
June Best Practices	154	34
July Best Practices	105	49
August Best Practices	220	61

Responses to the surveys are summarized below:

Evaluation Statements	Averaged percentage responding with "Yes" and "Extremely" (positive)
Call achieved its stated objectives	88%
Call was relevant to my job function	93%
Call increased my knowledge about the subject	91%
Strategies discussed during the call were effective	80%

Examples of feedback from call participants include:

Based on what you learned, identify a change you will make in your professional practice/job function?

"We've been very focused on education when the real focus should be action: recognition of vets, ceremonies, etc."

"Several ideas on how various agencies are honoring our Veterans. And how hospices have embraced this program. **We Honor Veterans** is such a great thing."

"Found more ways to network with potential partners and heard valuable information on how other programs are moving this program ahead."

"At this time we do not have the staff to implement this program as it is much more detailed than I expected. I currently hold 4 positions and I could not do it justice at this time. And it really saddens me."

Comments about this Networking Call

"It was really great to hear what other hospices are doing for the **We Honor Veterans** program, and inspiring to hear from the hospice that reached Level Four."

"I really enjoyed listening to all the activities of **WHV** hospices. It sounds like we are all on the right track. I look forward to our next listening and conversation."

"We are new to the program; it was all new and has generated ideas for our program."

“Wonderful pointers--cannot wait to get to Level Two.”

“We are a small, rural hospice agency. It would have been helpful if at least one of the people speaking about their Veteran-to-Veteran volunteers had been from a non-metropolitan area.”

VARRs

The Veteran Awareness Regional Representatives (VARRs) conducted a self-evaluation in early November to provide input to NHPCO about their position and its role in supporting the **WHV** program and Partners.

Excerpts from their responses have been synthesized below to describe overall themes and reflect VARR and NHPCO experience of the effectiveness and outcomes during implementation:

“Choice and self-determined closure are critical elements of a system that advocates for dignity and humane treatment of its citizens, particularly when they are most vulnerable. ”

“Hospice-Veteran Partnerships offer an unprecedented level of collaboration that supports the highest level of choice in end-of-life care for Veterans. While it may seem evident to many that this choice has always been available, when patients, individuals and families are facing life-limiting situations, the difficulty in making decisions is relevant to how information is presented and the comfort of providers in presenting information in an informed and unbiased manner.”

“These partnerships recognize this and provide an environment where, together, VA and community hospices can offer comprehensive end-of-life care to Veterans. The VARR position can be the focal point for connection, collaboration and brainstorming. This position can easily share what has worked or not worked in other areas and assist in moving new HVPs through the trial period with fewer bumps. It is also the focal point for state hospice leaders as they encourage their members to implement the **WHV** campaign. ”

“Working with my VARR colleagues and the grantee assigned to me was an enriching experience. I was already passionate about the care of Veterans at the end of life and have a strong Hospice-Veteran partnership in my state but was able to continue building upon that with the resources and commitment to **WHV** program.”

“It has been an honor to be part of the Veteran initiatives for the past three years. The insight I have gained can't be put into words. Thank you for this opportunity. It changed me more than anyone else.”

“Sign me up for another year. I loved doing this work.”

The bulleted items below are taken directly from responses by the VARRs on their self-evaluation.

Lessons Learned

- Collaboration is absolutely critical to the on-going success of our efforts. Improving end-of-life care takes a community - one willing to work in partnership.
- It takes time and persistence in following up every few months. As is evidenced by the growth of **WHV** partners, we are gaining momentum.
- The biggest challenge of the **WHV** campaign is to move hospices to a true culture change, where “Veteran-centric” is part of who they are and is no longer a campaign. That will take time and consistent follow-up.
- The position provided additional opportunities to improve my understanding of VA particularly in terms of language and relationship building with VA partners.
- The importance of relationship development and communication skills cannot be stressed enough.
- Competition for time due to an extremely active policy year challenged my ability to be consistent in meeting some of these goals.
- An unexpectedly low number of requests for technical assistance were likely due to lack of awareness of the VARRs by **WHV** Recruits and Partners.

Technical Assistance

- I had a personal goal of working with all ten of my State Organization Executives in promoting the **WHV** in their state; I did not meet that goal. I made contact with each State several times but did not get a level of commitment from half of them.
- Hospice programs would call and say they had no idea how to establish a relationship with the VA. A great deal of my time was connecting them with resources at their VAMCs and also with other Veteran-related resources in their communities.
- Support was provided around the relationship with the grantee's VA partners.
- The most common issues discussed during these technical calls/emails were locating specific resources, completing partner level reports, PTSD, and starting or re-energizing state Hospice-Veteran Partnerships.

Sustainability

- I feel that the increase in the number of **WHV** partners in each state is a true measure of the success of the entire campaign, of which the VARR is just one component. I believe it was my contacts and follow-up that kept and keeps it on the front burner.
- In talking with grantees from the first two years, some have sustained their work and others have not. Future funding is an important conversation.

- This group (VARRs) could act as a liaison between NHPCO and VA, representing the providers and state activities, HVP relationships, etc.
- I have helped hospices identify foundations that offer collaborative grant funding to address Veteran issues. I take great pride in helping staff augment those grants by realizing their potential to be creative and resourceful.
- The biggest challenge was getting people to start the dialogue because many looked at it as more work and are already overloaded. Once we were talking, it was relatively easy to get them excited about **WHV** and involved in an HVP.

Vision for the Future

- Keep up activities, relationships and be a voice for dying Veterans in the US.
- I have always been amazed at how committed and dedicated VA staff are to their mission to serve Veterans. Hospice can learn much from them about commitment and passion.
- The only thing that would make my response “strongly agree” is to know that I had one more year. I feel like it has all come together in the last month, people in my region know who I am, how I function and how I can help.
- Take a more active role in identifying opportunities to honor Veterans at a national level as well. Focus on a national Veterans Day program and recognition.
- Identify sustainable funding and augment the **WHV** program with the availability of mentors.

NHPCO recognizes the value of the VARR role in supporting the efforts and activities of **WHV** Partners. The most difficult challenges center around funding for the position and allocation of time for the responsibilities of the position, given the busy schedules and commitments of state hospice executives.

Finding a means to provide this level of support to the Partners would greatly enhance NHPCO’s ability to develop additional resources and increase collaboration between community hospices and VA facilities.

Audience/Partner Research

This is an overview of the six questions addressed by the 2011 survey by Free Range Studios. (Note: The final survey document is posted to the **WHV** website at [Reaching Out Reports and Resources](#).)

Has the commitment to understanding Veterans’ needs increased among hospice professionals?

It appears the commitment to understanding Veterans’ end-of-life needs has increased among hospice/palliative care professionals since the **WHV** campaign launched in 2010.

- In 2010, 40% of respondents to the question, “Has your organization put specific programmatic interventions and/or procedures in place for Veterans?” answered “Yes.” This grew to 62% in 2011, a 22 point increase.
- To the question, “Do you determine whether each incoming patient is a Veteran?” in 2010, 76% of question respondents answered, “Yes.” This increased eight percentage points to 84% in 2011.
- In 2010, when asked, “Do you plan to improve your hospice’s capacity to care for Veterans in the future?” about half of respondents (53%) to the question answered, “Yes.” This grew to 72% in 2011, nearly a 20 point increase.

While it’s likely the sample is biased toward people who see Veteran care as important to begin with, these findings appear to demonstrate a true increase in a growing understanding of Veterans’ end-of-life needs. Open-ended comments and one-on-one interviews reflect a “buzz” within the NHPCO member community around Veteran care.

Have hospice care professionals heard about the *We Honor Veterans* campaign?

Seventy-two percent of respondents to the question, “Have you heard of the *We Honor Veterans* Campaign?” answered “Yes.” Again, while the sample is likely biased toward people familiar with the campaign, comments and interviews indicate that the NHPCO emails to Recruits and Partners has been very effective in disseminating information about the campaign and driving traffic to the *WHV* website. People are also learning about the campaign when they attend conferences or via word of mouth.

But there is also room for significant growth and increased momentum here. First, there is an opportunity for NHPCO to ramp up networking among other organizations that cut across Veteran issues, such as nursing associations, pain management groups, and other regional end-of-life care networks. Second, as more people reach out to VA as they move up through the partnership levels, they sometimes find their contacts do not know about the program or that it is supported by VA.

Are hospice professionals aware of the campaign’s website and its resources?

Yes, however there is room for growth here as well. In 2010, 85% of people answering the question, “Have you ever visited the NHPCO website to access content about end-of-life care for Veterans?” said “no.” In this year’s survey, we asked, “Have you ever visited the *We Honor Veterans* website?” Sixty-two percent of the respondents to the question answered, “yes.” In other words, NHPCO’s membership did not see the NHPCO website (or NHPCO) as a primary resource on Veterans issues before the *WHV* campaign launched.

With regard to the resources people remember from the **WHV** site, the partnership program, information about Hospice-Veteran partnerships, resources about various aspects of Veteran care, and the Military History Checklist topped the list. Yet no more than 55% of question respondents remembered any of these items.

As the campaign enters its second year, NHPCO should continue to use email to remind people about the partnership program, the website’s resources, and to drive them to useful content.

How could the campaign better serve hospice professionals in the future?

At the end of our survey, we asked people if they had any final comments regarding **WHV**. More than 450 people left comments. Twenty-six percent of these comments were highly positive, such as these two:

“...It is so exciting to see NHPCO take the lead for honoring our Veterans...”

“Long overdue; thankful for NHPCO guidance on an issue that we all should have thought to identify/ address in the first place.”

NHPCO staff have categorized the responses for this question, they are included in the table below. Actual comments, published separately, will be used in guiding the development of new resources as well as working with VA colleagues to ensure better understanding and collaboration between community hospices and VA facilities.

Category of Response
More staff education about specific issues
Information/resources to help improve relationships with VA and Veteran service organizations
Information about Veteran benefits and how to navigate VA to get those benefits
Not aware of <i>We Honor Veterans</i> , need more information about the program
Resource Suggestions
Improve community awareness/education about WHV and Veteran needs at the end of life
Keep the resources, updates and networking opportunities coming
More information on the needs of Veterans from specific wars
More support/information for family members of Veterans
Make the WHV level requirements and process clearer
More emphasis on minority Veterans such as females and African Americans
Help getting state-wide partnerships (HVP) started
Lobby for Veterans needs at EOL

Many respondents see NHPCO as a leader for launching **WHV** and look to the organization to grow the program over time.

Are more hospices using the Military History Checklist?

Yes, more people are using the checklist and it is one of the more highly recalled resources from the *WHV* website.

Anecdotal stories about its usefulness are beginning to emerge, like this one:

“We had a [Veteran] patient. He had a son in Iraq and a daughter in Afghanistan. We used the checklist and on it there is a question about family. He said, ‘Yes, I have a son and daughter.’ The social worker followed up and we were able to get the son back before the dad died.”

Another individual reported that the checklist revealed that a dying patient’s spouse was a Veteran. This helped them direct him to a bereavement group of other Veterans. In this way, it helped them care for the patient and her entire family.

Have the online behaviors of hospice staff changed since the campaign launched- e.g. with regard to their use of smart phones, laptops or even tablets?

Hospice care professionals are rapidly adopting mobile smart phones and are beginning to use them for emailing and reading news. In 2010, of the respondents who answered about technology use, 30% said they used a mobile phone for email and 13% for reading news. In 2011, these percentages hopped up to 42% and 23% respectively.

Open-ended comments contained many mentions of iPad adoption.

In our one-on-one interviews, we also heard of new regulations that will require hospice/palliative care professionals to use tablet-like devices for making notes as they travel from home-to-home. It’s possible these devices will become primary tools for email communication as well. These trends should be observed closely and *WHV* should develop resources that are “tablet-friendly” and can be used by professional caregivers to provide Veterans and their families with additional information about available benefits, care and services.

We Honor Veterans Summit

This one-day meeting was held in San Diego, CA, on October 5, 2011. Entitled “Conversations in Collaboration”, it was attended by more than 125 individuals focused on learning more about *We Honor Veterans*, integrating Veteran-centric education and activities into their community and state organizations, and developing and maintaining collaborative relationships with VA facilities and other healthcare and service organizations

The day featured presentations by Scott Shreve, DO, National Director, Hospice and Palliative Care with VA, Emil Zuberbueler, Director of National Veterans Programs with NHPKO, and the Veterans Awareness Regional Representatives (VARRs).

Representatives from Option Year One and Two grantee programs presented the Reaching Out models they had developed and implemented.

Afternoon breakout sessions were led by the VARRs and VA staff from VISNs 1, 10, 16, 22 and 23, with discussions focused on the relationship between community hospices and VA facilities.

A networking breakfast was held the following morning and attended by over 100; the majority had not attended the previous day's Summit.

Feedback from attendees during the remainder of the Conference and in the following weeks is summarized below, reported to staff verbally and in session evaluations, which were completed by approximately 1/3 of the attendees.

Evaluation Statements	Percentage responding with "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"
Satisfaction with the Summit	95%
Satisfaction with materials/resources	97%
Relevance to role with <i>WHV</i>	97%
Likelihood of participating in future learning opportunities	99%

Examples of feedback from participants include:

Summit

- There were many "ah-ha" moments for me during this presentation. I am using many of these ideas for our outreach to Veterans in need.
- New and inventive ideas about community involvement will be very helpful.
- Good to hear how other hospices are reaching out
- I believe in the passion and excitement of each program - presenters were understandably nervous and this detracted somewhat from the presentation overall
- Some repetition but very relevant- cannot be heard enough
- Appreciate the examples but also the passion

Networking Breakfast

- We will incorporate more of the *WHV* resources into intentional education for staff
- Great networking opportunity
- Again - all very inspiring. The networking opportunity was great, the presentations the second morning were repetitive of day 1.
- Another great opportunity to network and hear more information.

- I hope we will have more of these in the future.

National Awards

The inaugural **WHV** Partner Awards in October, 2011, recognized outstanding achievement in the categories of Partnerships, Innovation and Sustainability.

Award for Partnerships: Sutter VNA, Hospice Santa Rosa, California

Sutter VNA, Hospice Santa Rosa demonstrated the ability to establish solid business relationships to promote the goals of ***We Honor Veterans***, through collaboration on projects, events, and other activities with community and VA partners.

In explaining the organization's philosophy about partnerships, they wrote, "Outreach to Veterans in our community cannot be sustained without the development of strong partnerships with other like-minded organizations in our community, all striving to improve the quality of life for our Veterans and their families in all stage of their lives."

Award for Innovation: Ambercare Hospice of Albuquerque, New Mexico

Ambercare Hospice successfully created highly engaged staff and volunteers, unique organizational education programs and innovative community outreach activities to ensure Veterans receive care and services based on their preferences.

Personnel have volunteered to facilitate the training of staff, community training and meetings, as well as organize the pinnings of our Veterans. Veterans have been recruited as volunteers to visit Veteran patients. Staff were active participants in the National PTSD Awareness rally, providing literature and listing of resources and support.

Award for Sustainability: Hope HealthCare Services of Ft. Myers, Florida

Hope Healthcare Services has the structures and functions in place to maintain and increase efforts and commitment to serving Veterans, through planning, policies, and fundraising. Significant, measureable integration of Veteran-centric education, activities, care and services have been developed and integrated into all aspects of the organization.

This hospice began honoring Veterans in 2007 with a Veteran-centric care program called "Veterans Access to Life Opportunities & Resources", also known as VALOR. To ensure Veterans receive quality care, services and recognition. Twenty four



Veterans are trained to serve as volunteers to Veteran patients and all volunteers receive a 45 minute presentation on caring for Veterans receiving hospice care. There is active collaboration with four VA Medical Centers.

State Hospice Organization Surveys

The data collected from these surveys will become part of a national database and used to inform future projects addressing challenges related to doing business with VA. The goal is to have 100% participation by all states, with completion by December 31, 2011.

As of November 16, these states had requested the link to their state’s survey:

- New Jersey
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- Maine
- Georgia
- Nevada
- West Virginia
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Michigan
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Virginia
- Minnesota
- Oregon
- Nebraska
- Washington
- Ohio
- California

Sustainability

Sustainability Status Update from Three Year Plan Overview

2011-2012				
Strategy	Objective	Tactics	Goal	Progress (to date: 11/19/11)
Donor Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a database of We Honor Veterans donors/ supporters • Create donor messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a process to identify likely donors to We Honor Veterans (WHV) within the current NHF donor database • Purchase a targeted list(s) of donors whose giving history indicates a high likelihood of support for WHV • Mail or email first wave of donor appeals 	\$2,000	Currently preparing donor acquisition campaign for launch before year-end to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mail package ▪ list acquisition of donors who support veteran causes- total of 50,000 homes ▪ Mail Date: Nov. 28 (determined by charities who own lists/List broker)
Grants and Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize philanthropic organizations, corporate supporters and foundations with the highest probability of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the current research process • Develop a grant strategy for WHV that includes the number of grants to be submitted each year and the focus of each grant • Submit proposals to potential partners for contracted WHV 	TBD	Grants submitted/in process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Walmart Foundation LOI submitted 6/22/11-\$650,000 - DECLINED ▪ E. Rhodes and Leona B Carpenter Foundation submitted 7/31/11-\$100,000 -DECLINED



	<p>funding WHV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for contracted work to fund aspects of WHV 	<p>work</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 additional Foundations identified as prospects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goodrich Foundation - Harley Davidson Foundation - California Wellness Foundation - Vietnam Veterans Assistance Fund, Inc - Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation, Inc.
Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the importance of national hospice Veteran initiatives • Create opportunities for Gala attendees and sponsors to support WHV • Implement an outreach strategy to link WHV and <i>Run to Remember</i> (R2R) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Gala sponsors about We Honor Veterans recognition prior to the event to solicit support for WHV activities • Conduct a recognition pinning ceremony for Gala attendees who are Veterans • Honor VA and hospice providers who are WHV partners during the Gala program • Provide We Honor Veterans donation envelopes to Gala attendees • Provide opportunities for silent auction bidders to “add \$25 or more in support of We Honor Veterans” • Develop messaging regarding opportunities for Run to Remember runners for WHV 	\$75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gala: Auction: winning bidders were asked at auction check-out to add donation restricted to WHV. Total raised: \$200 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Run To Remember</i> program: (runners who raise money for the WHV program through the National Hospice Foundation’s running program) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jim Smith is running the Marine Corps marathon. Goal: \$100,000. Total to date: \$17,365 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Project 22</i>: Joyce Michel is walking 22 kilometers, 22 times in 60 days, while raising awareness and revenue for WHV. (Goal is \$20,000 for WHV) • <i>One Bike, One Cause</i>: JW Frye is cycling from FL to AK, stopping at hospices, raising awareness and revenue for WHV.
Major Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize potential major donors to support WHV • Begin cultivation of major donors to support WHV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue prospect research and wealth screening to identify likely major donors • Develop messaging and strategies for major donor cultivation • Conduct at least 1 major donor cultivation activity 	TBD	<p>Efforts are devoted to donor outreach to identify and cultivate donors of all levels, including major donors.</p>
Passive Donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and begin implementation of a passive donation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current web messaging and develop alternative messaging to test throughout the year • Develop a WHV cause on 	\$1,000	<p>WHV cause on Facebook is created and donations are sent through Network for Good (WHV11). To date: \$785.78</p> <p>General donations through the</p>



	strategy that includes WHV and NHF websites, Facebook and Google Ad words	<p>Facebook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage WHV partners and VARRs to link to web and Facebook sites 		National Hospice Foundation website. To date: \$100
Marketplace Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote WHV Marketplace items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expose potential customers to WHV product line via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Conferences (NHPCO & others) Partnerships with state hospice organizations Online catalog and web links Promotional flyer Ads in publications (NewsBriefs, NewsLine, Journal of Pain & Symptom Management) 	\$3,000	Products are for sale in Marketplace to include postcards, pins, educational training materials, promotional items (hats, clothing). Total Revenue: \$64,269.65 October 2010 – November 2011
TOTAL REVENUE GOAL			\$81,000	\$81,734.65 (as of 11/21/11)

National Hospice Foundation (NHF) Website Updates

Postings on National Hospice Foundation (NHF) website about Global Vision award to VA/VHA. Link to pages: <http://www.nationalhospicefoundation.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=579> and <http://www.nationalhospicefoundation.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=587> .

VA also posted to its website at: <http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20110415a.asp>

7th Annual Gala a Resounding Success (with Global Vision award)
<http://www.nationalhospicefoundation.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=587>

WHV Gala Program Advertisement, with mention of donation envelope placed at attendee tables and link to NHF donation page.

2011 Summer Quarterly Report: “Five Tips to Support Those Who’ve Lost a Loved One in Service to our Country”
http://www.nationalhospicefoundation.org/files/public/quarterly/NHF_quarterly_summer_11.pdf

Addition of Veterans section to website:
<http://www.nationalhospicefoundation.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=556> with link to **WHV** website, and to online donation page:
<https://www.nationalhospicefoundation.org/i4a/forms/form.cfm?id=65&pageid=517&showTitle=1>

Rollout of **We Honor Veterans** video during Gala program, now posted on YouTube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6WpXxvLPEw>

Grantee Projects

In November 2010, NHPCO released a request for proposals for Option Year Two of the Reaching Out contract. The focus of the request was to identify and fund hospice agencies working to improve access to quality hospice and palliative care for rural and homeless Veterans, through the implementation of the replicable models developed during the first two years of the contract. Thirty six proposals were received by NHPCO. After extensive evaluations by a panel of reviewers consisting of NHPCO staff, state hospice leaders, and other healthcare providers, five grants were awarded to those proposals that demonstrated:

- capacity for and commitment to providing Veteran-centric care and services
- well-developed partnerships with VA medical centers and/or other facilities
- cost-effectiveness
- maximization of existing resources

The organizations receiving the grants were:

- Guardian Hospice, Franklin, TN
- Hope Hospice and Palliative Care, Medford, WI
- HCI Care Services, West Des Moines, IA
- Mercy Hospice, Roseburg, OR
- Mountain Hospice, Belington, WV

The NHPCO team notified grantees of awards in January and these five organizations began work on their groundbreaking projects to improve awareness of and access to end-of-life care for Veterans in communities across the United States.

As evidence of their ongoing dedication to Veterans, they each had well-established partnerships with VA facilities and other agencies providing care and services to Veterans.

Throughout the year, technical assistance was provided to grantees by NHPCO staff and the following Veteran Awareness Regional Representatives (VARRs), who are leaders in their state hospice organizations: Kandyce Powell (ME), Jamey Boudreaux (LA/MS), Jennifer Eurek (NE), Anne Koepsell (WA), Jeff Lycan (OH).

A wealth of information from the grantee final reports is arranged here by general themes identified by NHPCO. See the WHV [Reaching Out Reports and Resources](#) webpage for detailed information submitted by each grantee.

Successes

- Support from the leadership team is the single most important catalyst in moving the programs forward. With the right people leading the way and making Veteran support a

priority, it was easy to get time at meetings to present educational programs and create/provide other supporting materials.

- An hour on the Patient Care Manager's monthly meeting agenda was secured specifically for Veteran education. Employees and volunteers now understand that Veterans really may have a different life and final journey.
- Participating in the Veterans Stand down and providing information about Family Support Services and Transitions program.
- Community presentations resulted in increased awareness of Veteran-related issues and how to assist a Veteran with obtaining services.
- Outreach to community and adult foster homes very successful. Overwhelming response to presentations. Greater than 210 community members and healthcare workers received information on Veteran project and Veteran specific cares.
- Attending adult foster care meetings led to relationship with state licenser who championed our project and sent our flyer to all licensed homes in the county. This gave us a larger than expected amount of foster homes interested in being involved in project.
- Training our staff in the military checklist and Veteran specific care helped us identify Veterans and address any unique needs they might have through the plan of care. As time progressed that we moved from barely addressing Veteran status to asking 100% of new admits about military service.
- Developing fostering and maintaining relationships with area discharge planners. Hosted a community wide discharge planner networking luncheon, which was very well received. Each party was able to describe their role and how this would impact the planning of care for Veterans.

Challenges/Solutions

- With so many great ideas, it was difficult to keep our project focused; we needed to remember to reflect back on our project objectives frequently.
- VA system is often cumbersome. Rather than taking on the system as a whole, we started to develop relationships with key personnel; i.e. Discharge planners, hospice/palliative care medical director, chaplain, and VISN palliative care coordinator.
- Knowing so many opportunities were available to reach out and educate, it was very hard to know where to start and how to prioritize.
- Most organizations do not have one employee devoted to this type of Veteran program. Providers will likely have to meld the program into other staff positions which means it may take longer to initiate and plan for its sustainability.
- Many Veterans are too ill to travel to the VA Medical Center to officially enroll for their benefits.

Replication of Reaching Out Program Models

In planning and implementing a Veteran-centric program of education, care and services, grantees recommended that an organization carefully consider the following questions and their responses before proceeding:

- The single most important motivator to the success of the project was backing from the leadership team. Without their involvement, employees would not have the opportunity to learn about the special needs of Veterans nor would they get the support necessary to make beneficial changes.
- The employee responsible for implementing and managing the program must be willing to spend a significant amount of time learning about the uniqueness of Veterans' lives, benefit opportunities, the VA, Veteran-centric groups, etc. This person should know where to turn to resolve Veteran questions and concerns and co-workers should feel comfortable turning to her/him for answers.
- Remember that not everyone in your organization is going to have the same passion for the project and you may need to do some marketing in your own organization for key staff to see the big picture for the project and value of the program.
- Working in partnership with a Hospice Veteran partnership at a state or regional level is a key component to community partner development.
- Provide education to those organizations Veterans may access first. A good place to start the process is to join the **We Honor Veterans** Campaign.
- Appoint a Veteran liaison. This person will be responsible for seeking outreach opportunities.
- It is helpful to remember Veterans are everywhere and aren't always reached through most obvious sources.
- For working with the VA Health Care System, it is helpful to understand which VISNs, CBOCs and VAMCs are in your area. Helpful contacts within the VA include the VISN Palliative Care Team and Clinical Champion.
- Utilize the **We Honor Veterans** materials to create a Veteran-centric culture at your organization.
- Commit to on-going monitoring and assessment of your progress with initiative. The **We Honor Veterans** partner levels and the FEHC survey are just two ways of doing this.

Engaging Veterans

When talking with Veterans, some important points to keep in mind include:

- Don't ask them to share war memories. As your relationship develops they will most likely open up if they trust you.
- Be mindful of your expressions and do not show judgment. It is best to keep your facial expressions relaxed and just quietly listen. Also, get comfortable with silence, allow him/her to express freely without interruption.



- If they tell you about a traumatic experience or something they did and appear to not have any emotions attached to it, understand that this may be a coping mechanism and may be related to PTSD.
- Approach with good intentions to help, versus trying to grow your business.
- Be truthful and honest in all your communications with Veterans—some have had extensive training on reading people and they can easily spot someone who is dishonest.
- Take every opportunity to thank a Veteran no matter where you are.
- When asking the Veteran about their service, it is important for staff and volunteers to understand that we are not trying to force a Veteran to use VA services, particularly if they have had a negative experience, but more to ask about their life as it relates to their military service.
- Continue to look for opportunities to connect with others working on Veterans projects in the community. Every speaking engagement is likely to have Veterans or families of a Veteran in the audience as well.
- Understand and accept that there are some Veterans facing homelessness as their preferred lifestyle. Our only responsibility is to offer services but they maintain the right to accept or not accept if they are competent enough to make their own decisions.

Lessons Learned

As with successes and challenges, the grantees learned some important lessons, which they shared in their reports:

- The “Keep it Simple” KISS Principle applies to this outreach. Don’t make tools complicated or cumbersome to use.
- One type of tool won’t work for all; define who your target groups are and develop tools around what that particular group will most likely use and will be simple and easy to use.
- The importance of a champion from a local VA and a hospice leader is critical. There should be a clear mission and purpose, and ongoing attention and focus on the mission and purpose.
- Assure you have adequate time to complete your work plan. You can always add more objectives as you go.
 - Think through your work plan and make your outcomes measurable.
 - Set a committee and meet regularly.
 - Gather a community group to meet with the committee and delegate.
 - Present your objectives to your outreach groups for feedback and buy-in.
- The internet has endless information so you can find resources to assist in your work.

Sustainability

- Keep Veteran concerns or issues a priority throughout the organization
- Offer annual education to hospice staff and volunteers, Veteran Service Organizations, and other healthcare and service organizations.
- Ensure all new staff complete Veteran-specific modules as part of orientation
- Search and apply for additional funding through local and other foundations and organizations with an interest in Veterans.
- Continue to make Veteran facts and issues a part of orientation for new employees.
- Incorporate uniform guidelines and promote ongoing use of **We Honor Veterans** education materials throughout service areas, ensuring the best in care for Veterans.
- Build Veteran-centric education and activities into the fabric of your organization.
- Develop a Best Practices Policy so that what is expected when caring for Veterans is known and understood
- Use Veteran volunteers to spread the word/ignite future excitement
- Schedule periodic VA guest panel for Q & A sessions with employees
- Resources needed to sustain this project are continued interest and support from partner agencies; invitations to other interested parties in the area such as hospitals, home health agencies and nursing home providers.
- Recruit Veteran volunteers to provide support for Veteran patients.
- Utilize **WHV** resources and other resources from VA, VSOs, and Service Officers to assist with educating community providers.
- Offer to serve as an education resource partner with the CBOC, Veteran Service Officers and VAMC.

Insights and Recommendations for the Future

NHPCO offers the following insights and recommendations to VA's Hospice and Palliative Care Program to improve outreach to Veterans and utilization of quality end-of-life care for rural and homeless Veterans.

Recommendations from Base Year through Option Year Two are included here to reflect the experience and insights gained throughout the Reaching Out contract.

Insights: Guiding and Informing Future Veterans Program Activities

NHPCO Internal Program Management

- The ideal is to see all programs routinely addressing Veteran issues in a comprehensive manner. NHPCO will explore how to support Partners in accomplishing this.

- Evaluate how to most efficiently and effectively to provide technical assistance **We Honor Veterans** Recruits, Partners and other organizations that provide care and services to Veterans.
- Develop and post additional educational resources that promote the use of Reaching Out Model Programs among hospices and palliative care programs.
- Continue to review and enhance the layout and contents of **We Honor Veterans** website.
- Collaborate with other national healthcare organizations to explore seamless continuity of care across settings.
- Develop process and outcome evaluation tools for programs and activities to demonstrate effectiveness.
- Ensure there are Veteran-centric presentations at NHPCO's and other organization national meetings to showcase and disseminate best practices.
- Through the NHPCO's Council of States and other constituencies, encourage state hospice organizations to place Veteran-related presentations on their meeting agendas, using the **We Honor Veterans** PowerPoints and other resources.
- Continue to explore all avenues of sustaining the **We Honor Veterans** program, website and Partner activities.

Messaging and "Philosophical" Discussions with NHPCO Members

- Hospices and VA share a common goal: Providing the best possible care for Veterans in the best possible manner and setting. Hospices can use their expertise to reach Veterans and provide quality care. In doing this, they say to the Veteran, "you are safe with us", and to VA staff, "we are committed to caring for Veterans as you would care for them."
- Healthcare professionals other than hospice staff know how to care for people that are dying: we don't have a corner on the market. We must focus on working together and build upon available services and skill sets.
- Incorporate Veteran acknowledgment at hospice and palliative care sponsored events.
- Many Veterans prefer providers and services from other Veterans. Provide hospice volunteers and staff with the opportunity to identify themselves as Veterans and work with Veteran patients and families.
- Invite VA staff to participate in local and regional meetings of community hospice providers.
- Open, honest, respectful communication is critical to successful partnerships with VA facilities and staff.
- There is a great variance in outreach to Veterans and quality of care they receive, across both community hospices and VA facilities.
- Many Veterans do not know about benefits available to them: community hospices can be part of solving this information gap.
- Many hospice providers are willing to invest time, money, resources and staff without direct benefit to their bottom line because they are committed to improving end-of-life care for Veterans. Conversely, some providers have reported that they are not willing to devote time and energy to Veteran outreach unless it will increase their referrals.

- ***We Honor Veterans*** is a great solution to locating needed information and resources for educating staff, volunteers, Veterans and other community members.

NHPCO's Recommendations to VA

VA Information and Policies

- Much progress has been made in developing relationships with VA staff across the country. Encourage VISN clinical champions and program directors to foster collaboration with community providers in their service areas:
 - Develop new relationships or strengthen existing relationships with community hospice organizations
 - When possible, participate in local and regional meetings of community hospice providers
 - Participate in future ***We Honor Veterans*** educational and networking calls.
- Work to develop a seamless delivery system for end-of-life care that supports both VAMCs and community hospices.
- Shorten the enrollment time for Veterans who are terminally ill or consider a way to expedite the enrollment.
- Continue to clarify guidelines for hospice and palliative care reimbursement and collaborate with NHPCO to disseminate this information.
- Develop guidelines for community inpatient hospice placement and reimbursement for Veterans in rural areas when the closest VAMC is too far for families to travel.
- Develop a resource explaining the guidelines for expediting enrollment of terminally-ill Veterans.

VA Communication and Education

- Enhance clinical education about Veterans and the specific medical, mental health and psycho-social issues that accompany each conflict/war era:
 - Develop Veteran-centric education about PTSD for community provider clinical staff
 - Provide educational sessions at local, state and national meetings of community hospice and other healthcare providers
- Focus more attention on women Veterans.
- Through Hospice Veteran Partnerships, continue to develop clear communication pathways between VA staff and hospice staff.

Resources for Veterans

- Provide increased access to transportation for Veterans in rural areas.
- Provide Veterans with greater access to end-of-life care resources to enable better informed decisions about their care.

- Create “patient navigators” to assist Veterans who are entering the healthcare system and seeking end-of-life care and services. Patient navigators could be volunteers or other Veterans who know the system.

Resources for Community Providers

- Consider Veterans’ stories as a routine part of healthcare assessment.
- Create additional guidelines and Veteran-specific resources for community healthcare providers about how to advocate for Veterans.
- Enhance community education about Veterans’ issues.
- Develop relationships with First Responder and Homeless agencies to provide top-down education in identifying Veterans in need of hospice and palliative care.

Website Resources: Option Year One and Two Reports

Numerous resources were developed or updated during Option Years One and Two and are posted on the **We Honor Veterans** website at [WHV Partner Resources](#). Each may be viewed and downloaded by the user as needed.

The reports and resources from Option Years One and Two grantees are posted on the **WHV** website at [Reaching Out Reports and Resources](#).

Acknowledgements

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization gratefully acknowledges the Department of Veterans Affairs for its generous support of the Reaching Out project, and the following individuals for their efforts in developing the *We Honor Veterans* program and resources.

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The staff of Free Range Studios, Washington, DC

Dedicated to Veterans of the US Military with Gratitude

A Vietnam Veteran (physician) came up to me after the presentation and said, "Your presentation made me open my eyes. I didn't like caring for Vietnam Veterans. There was so much substance abuse. I never allowed myself to think about why. Your presentation gave me insights that I have never allowed myself to acknowledge. Thank you."

Submitted by Kandyce Powell
Maine Hospice Council