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Spotlight on...



Monthly Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2015 • 2 PM to 4 PM

Austin Dog Alliance

1321 W New Hope Dr, 78613 Cedar Park , TX

Summary

- Hounds For Heroes is an assistance dog program. They're committed to professionalism and should be certified by **Assistance Dogs International** in January 2016. Debi highlighted how the therapy/assistance dog domain is remarkably unregulated (which served to emphasize how special HFH's commitment is). A dog from HFH costs from \$4,500 to \$500.
- CORE Health Care is one of 20 VA-partnered brain rehab. providers. They provide life-skills rehab with living buildings; speech, vision, cognitive, skills therapy. Shopping, cooking, gym; community. A veteran must have a VA diagnosis and referral to CORE to use their services.
- A New Entry provides transitional housing for homeless people (not just veterans) and people coping with addiction.
- The Furnishings Committee has reached out to several existing orgs; Veteran Office Supplies may have a lead on warehouse space. Jason has a lead on furnishing supply.
- Career Fair: Jason may have a place secured for end of March 2016.
- Next Meeting: October 29, 2016 from 2 to 4 PM at

Opening

Bo Buell called to order at 2:03 and opened with a minute of silence.

Introductions

23 people introduced themselves. About 30 people were present.

Partner Spotlights

Hounds for Heroes (Austin Dog Alliance)

Debi Krakar

(512) 335-7100

debi@austindogalliance.org

Debi opened with a video: Veterans Allen and Pat share how service dogs changed their lives: <https://youtu.be/YSVNr6gLWqI>

Their website is: <http://www.austindogalliance.org/>

Their mission is to improve the health of people and families through programs that connect dogs to people.

They have several programs:

- * Therapy dogs
- * Summer Camps (Kids+ dogs)
- * Job Skills (for adults with disabilities) (coaching and placement; 50% completion rate, which is a good rate for people w. disabilities)
- * Special dogs for special needs (TBI, anxiety, etc.)
- * Hounds for Heroes

Debi explained the difference between Therapy, Service, and Comfort / Emotional Support dogs.

Therapy Dogs work in a team with a handler, to help people. They're the canine equivalent of a therapist. Nursing homes, hospitals, libraries, etc. (Animal-Assisted Activities); Also Animal-assisted therapy.

Service Dogs are trained for public access. Trained for at least three tasks for assistance (to mitigate a disability).

- Guide dogs, Hearing dogs, and Service dogs (PTSD, epilepsy, peanut alert, etc.)
- Not regulated/legislated. Anyone can put a vest on a dog and call their dog a service dog. No training requirements, no vetting.

Comfort / Emotional Support are prescribed for individuals.

These are the pets you'll see most often on airplanes.

- Prescription = valid. The animal does not need to be trained. These dogs are allowed in places that specifically prohibit dogs.

Debi expressed concern about the unregulated nature of Service and Comfort dogs and encouraged anyone seeking a proper, well-trained service dog to contact **Assistance Dogs International** – a coalition of non-profit service dog suppliers. They're highly regarded. Very rigorous, not just for training, but for the organization. Austin Dog Alliance is following all their requirements, and should get "certified" in January 2016.

Hounds For Heroes

- To get a dog: Application, recommendation, doctor's form, 3 personal references, military discharge papers, tax return / proof of income
- It costs \$12 to \$15K to train each dog. They ask for \$4,500 (maximum). Can provide funding help. Lowest preference is

\$500 (The future veteran-owner needs to have some skin in the game.)

- Typical wait is 4 to 8 months
- The veteran must train with the dog for 3 to 4 days (30 to 40 hours) when the dog is ready.
- Each Veteran received support from Austin Dog Alliance for the life of the dog/veteran. ADA checks in every year on how things are.

PSA: Please ignore service dogs in public.

Q: Are there regulations for a service dog *owner*?

A: Disability that seriously limits their life.

Q: Are the dogs covered by insurance?

A: Neither insurance nor the VA covers dogs - not even dogs for the blind.

Q: Are there any ADA regulations?

A: No.

Q: Do you screen applicants?

A: Yes. Our application process is very extensive. No alcoholics. No people with a history of (enacting) physical abuse.

Q: Do you provide veterinary care?

A: Not officially. We do when it's needed; the owner can not care for them. We can get health insurance for dogs.

Q: Do you require military discharge documentation? What discharges do you accept?

A: We require honorable discharges. There are lots of rules – please contact us if you have questions.

Q: We get calls from people that assert that they're getting ejected because of their service dog. What advice can you give?

A: They should be ok if they have (or can get) a prescription.

Q: If an employee has a service dog and needs to provide documentation....

A: Employment is different from access. They may not have to abide a service dog. The laws are different.

Q: Do you have any clients with dogs on the job?

A: Pat - the person I noted before...

Q: If employer requires documentation for a dog you've trained here?

A: Prescription and our contact info.

Roberta Roque (Disability Rights Texas): If you have an access issue, contact Disability Rights Texas (Mon-Fri, 9 am - 4 pm • 1 (800) 252-9108) or Austin Dog Alliance.

CORE Health Care

Patience Buchanan, Dir. of Marketing & Business Dev.

512-894-0801 x122

pbuchanan@corehealth.com

Since 1985 - dripping springs - brain injury rehab expanded to shoal creek

Support group - 3rd Wednesday of every month; free and open to the public

TX Dept. of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (brain and spinal cord)

AL-TBI project Pilot program - started 2009

With the recent wars, the VA could not handle the influx; CORE is one of 20 providers across the nation to provide brain rehab.

If you're working with a vet with cognitive disorder, direct them to the VA for TBI, get a diagnosis, then CORE can assist them with rehab. >>>**A VA diagnosis is key**<<<

Symptoms: Memory, tasks, concentration.

She urged the audience to advocate and assist Veterans to seek the help (the diagnosis) they need.

Average rehab is 40 days. DARS program pays for 6 full months.

they do life-skills rehab. They have living buildings; speech, vision, cognitive, skills therapy. Shopping, cooking, gym,; community. Job accompaniment.

Patience B.: "I'm happy to meet one-on-one with the veteran and/or the family. I can help you help your vet get access to the resources they need."

Q: Eligibility?

A: It can be hard. We need to advocate on behalf of our vets. Get a neurologist / neurosurgeon from the VA to make the diagnosis.

Q: Is there a list of common TBI symptoms on your website?

A: I'll get one up there.

Q: Is a VA diagnosis enough?
 A: No. The VA also needs to make a referral.

Q: Can they get this diagnosis at the Austin VA?
 A: Yes, they can.
 Note: The Austin outpatient clinic has no case managers, so the veteran has to go to the polytrauma in San Antonio for proper diagnosis.

Note: As long as the veteran was on active duty, even if it's not an active duty injury, it's valid.

A New Entry

Bo Buell, Clinical Case Manager
 512-464-1250 xt 152
 michael.buell@anewentry.org

We are not a housing-first model. We work with a large number of different orgs to get the people in our program stabilized. Job retraining, education, etc.. We are not a veteran service org; we just help a lot of veterans (28 out of 36 people in our program). There are brochures on the back table about our program. Treatment facility, transitional housing, etc. We have two plans: One for men experiencing homelessness (38) and one at the McCabe center for addicts (42) - co-ed.

Also: We started a program two months ago called First Mondays where we feature speakers. It's an on-site 20-25 minute presentation on what you're about. After, you can meet with clients one-on-one.

If you're interested, contact Bo Buell (michael.buell@anewentry.org).

Old Business Furnishings Committee

- Vet Office Supplies - A business partner may be able to donate some warehouse space.
- *Paul Julio: We're doing a re-housed veterans fair; we're looking for employers who'll be friendly to recently rehoused veterans (background issues, transport-impaired).*
- *Ro - Goodwill employment program for vets over 55*
- *WOTC calculator for employer tax credit for hiring veterans. TVC website - Work Opportunity Tax Credit.*
- *Pia: Contact me - I have a few employers that are very willing to pick up veterans as employees.*
- Jason has a "live" resource for veteran furnishings; goodwill gift cards

CTVSC Fair Planning

- Looking at end of March.

Goal?

- Still shooting for one-stop-shop for all veteran services.
- We'll have space - private rooms - for people to do intake. Bring your DD-214, etc. and we'll help you right there.
- Paul: Org or employer - it's in the same place that he Workforce center is. That's access to phones, computers, printers, etc. Also WiFi, so you can bring your laptop and do work right there.
- Thought: If more orgs than tables, rotate VSOs out half-way through the event?

Location

- Jason thinks he has a facility secured.
 - Can accommodate 25 service agencies.
 - It's on Burleson - right near the VA.

Etc.

- Publicity: Push stuff to Jason at Goodwill.

October Meeting

- Casey Wade is next meeting's chair.
- Location: Workforce Center in Round Rock
- Last Thursday of the month - October 29th from 2 to 4.
- Spotlight: Lisa Rivers - Horses for Heroes
- Spotlight: Michelle Greavis - Benchmark Career Institute - TVC-approved training for GI Bill vets.
- Spotlight: Amy Marietta - Alliance Careers - Job placement for transitioning veterans

November Meeting (and Potluck?)

Pia is November's chair and has two Spotlight groups ready.

Success Stories

OneKey ATX: "Just give us one key." A city-sponsored all-donation "insurance" fund now exists to get renters to open their apartments to "shaky" OneKey ATX renters.

Jason: One of our case managers got a call from Colorado daughter, happened to be on the street with the daughter's father and reunited them on the phone.

Collaboration among a number of clients; Stage 4 cancer in Killeen; lots of support, including. Freedom Office Supplies.

Paul: A while back, we had a Vet looking for work. Now he's looking to hire some veterans.

Me: Great support from Center Point with several recent clients.

Bo: The knowledge of TBI shared today will help me with a client we have. He got a job 2 weeks ago and he's thriving.

April / VSA TX: A Veteran artist from San Antonio exhibited at their show in Galveston and got rep from a Santa Fe gallery. Yay!

Opportunities to Help

Amy Pensyl described a contact who was looking to get his truck back the day after it was repossessed.

- Goodwill TVC support service fund might-could have helped with that.
- TWC: He needs to reach out to them.
- TVC: Recycled Rides via Progressive (2 cars) - Get that to Casey or Sam.

Announcements

VASH Electric Discount Program

VASH recipients auto-qualify for a discount program for Austin Electric. Effective October 1st.

Next Meeting

- Date: Thursday October 29, 2015.
- Location: Texas Workforce Commission - 575 Round Rock W Dr #220 / Building H, 78681 Round Rock , TX
- Partner Spotlight: Horses For Heroes, Benchmark Career Institute, Alliance Careers
- Would you like a spotlight session? Do you want to be on the agenda? Contact Casey Wade – casey.wade@twc.state.tx.us