

April 28, 2014



## Many veterans get needed services at Veterans ‘Stand Down’ event

SARASOTA — Saturday’s (April 26) “Stand Down” event for veterans drew more than 200 people including homeless veterans.

“We were pleased to see so many veterans and those in need taking advantage of the recent event – offering them an opportunity to access a number of resources in one location,” said Phil Gorelick, vice president of the Operation Military Assistance Program (OMAP), a federally funded program initiated by Jewish Family & Children’s Service of the Suncoast Inc. to assist veterans with obtaining or maintaining permanent housing.

This was the third annual Veterans “Stand Down” event held at the William L. Little Health and Human Services Center (formerly known as the Sarasota County Health Department), located at 2200 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota. In 2013 and again this year, services were expanded to the city’s nearby Payne Park auditorium.

More than half of those who attended were homeless veterans. Those attending were able to get help in accessing Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and services, housing assistance for homeless veterans, legal services, health screenings, employment assistance services, and referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment.

More than 25 organizations were present, including Resurrection House, First Step of Sarasota, Coastal Behavioral Healthcare, Legal Aid of Manasota, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, the Career Source Suncoast (formerly known as Suncoast Workforce Board), the Center of Hope of South County, Goodwill Manasota, Harvest House, Turning Points, Manatee Glens and many others.

A big draw was the bags filled with nonperishable food provided by All Faiths Food Bank and personal-care items purchased with funds provided by a grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families and National Veterans Homeless Support Inc. The Department of Veterans Affairs’ Operation New Hope distributed surplus items such as boots, clothing and blankets. The Salvation Army provided food and refreshments at the event. Haircuts and manicures were provided again this year by student barbers and stylists from the Manatee Technical Institute.



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“We continue to be impressed and proud of the level of support we receive from all sectors of the community for this event,” said Rose Chapman, president and CEO of Jewish Family & Children’s Service of the Suncoast Inc., whose Operation Military Assistance Program organized the Stand Down. “Together we are able to provide much needed resources to homeless veterans, including hygiene and medical services.”

“Our community is proud of our veterans. For many veterans who are not connected to the system, this event provided an opportunity to connect with a range of needed services,” said Sarasota County Health and Human Services Director Chuck Henry, himself a veteran with a career in the U.S. Navy spanning over two decades.

Partnering organizations for this event included Jewish Family & Children’s Service of the Suncoast Inc., Florida Veterans for Common Sense, Bay Pines Healthcare Services, The Salvation Army-Sarasota Command, All Faiths Food Bank, Manatee Technical Institute, the City of Sarasota, the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (Health Department) and Sarasota County Government. Additional partnering organizations included the City of Sarasota, Goodwill Manasota, the Florida Department of Children and Families, and National Veterans Homeless Support Inc.

For more information, visit <http://www.JFCS-Cares.org/> or call 941-366-2224.

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