

## Town Hall Summary

As a final meeting for each of the VAL Units, each Collaborative Academic Research Member (CARM) and VAL Unit Leader (VAL-UL) hosted a final Town Hall Meeting in their respective state. This gave each Unit the opportunity to share with their community on a larger scale the results of their hard work over the past two years. The VAL Units were able to take questions from the community, present findings from their VAL Unit, and share the project's overall goals to the community at large. Most importantly, the VAL Units were able to address what their goals were moving forward to keep the VAL Unit in motion even after the end of this project. As a token of appreciation VAL Project Military Challenge Coins were distributed to those who attended the Town Halls.

### **California**

For this VAL Unit, the CARM, Dr. Cynthia Connelly from University of San Diego, and VAL Unit Leader, Aaron Seibert, U.S. Navy, met at the City of Lake Elsinore Community Center in Lake Elsinore, CA. The Town Hall took place on May 23, 2018 at 6 PM. The CARM, VAL Unit Leader and the local veterans were very dedicated to this project, and the Town Hall was well attended despite the fact that participants had to travel quite a distance to attend. There was an overwhelming interest in the Toolkit from all of the Town Hall attendees and they voiced their enthusiasm regarding the distribution of the Toolkit.

### **New York**

The New York VAL Unit was led by CARM Dr. Patrick Walsh from the University of Rochester and VAL-UL Ralph Presciutti, U.S. Army. To host their Town Hall Meeting, this VAL Unit invited veterans and community stakeholders to meet at Russo's Pizza in Rochester, NY on July

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26, 2018 at 7pm. Because their Unit style was a relaxed approach and conversational in nature, they chose to keep their Town Hall Meeting more intimate and personal. The NY VAL Unit used this time to thank their very loyal veteran and community partners who had attended multiple meetings throughout the duration of the project. Similar to most of the VAL Units, this unit discussed at the Town Hall, their plans to share the dialogue produced during the Think Tank Meetings with State legislators so that the voices of NY veterans can be heard.

### **Ohio**

CARM Dr. Sonia Duffy and VAL-UL David Hibler, U.S. Army, hosted their Town Hall meet on June, 6, 2018 at 6pm at James Cancer Center on OSU campus. The OH VAL Unit used this opportunity to answer questions from the community on the scope of the project and to describe the VAL Unit's goals for the future. One of the future goals discussed was the development of a white paper on veteran issues that would be disseminated to policymakers. Moreover, the VAL Project Team has encouraged all of the units to look for grant opportunities to fund their continued endeavors, and the Ohio Unit is planning to submit a grant.

### **Pennsylvania**

For this VAL Unit, Dr. Julie Decker (CARM), and Scott Eberhart, U.S. Air Force, held their Town Hall Meeting on June 21, 2018 at 11am at the American Legion in Cresson, PA. Veterans spanning several generations were present for this Town Hall. Multiple modes of healthcare information delivery were discussed at the Town Hall Meeting. These modes included cell phone apps, paper flyers, and the use of key informants. Attendees expressed gratitude to be a part of the VAL Project and verbalized that, as a result of participation, they are more informed on public policies surrounding veteran health care.

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## **Texas**

In Texas, the CARM, Dr. Danet Bluhm from University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio, and VAL-UL, Lyndon Villone, USMC, held their final Town Hall meeting on June 6, 2018 at 6:30 pm at the PTSD Foundation of America in San Antonio Texas. During this Town Hall, the VAL Unit Leader described their efforts to engage veterans over the past two years. shared prioritized issues identified during VAL unit meetings. The CARM and VAL-UL encouraged all veterans to continue engagement in the Unit's continued activities. The agenda for the Town Hall Meeting also included a description of available veteran resources in the San Antonio area, including the PTSD Foundation, Military Health Institute, Animal Assisted Therapy, Military Transition Unit, Healthcare Provider and Veteran Access Nonprofit. Across the board, veterans expressed not only their satisfaction working with the VAL project but also expressed their desire to participate in future community engagement projects.

## **Florida**

The CARM of FL was Dr. Linda Weglicki from Florida Atlantic University and the VAL-UL is Austin Capers, U.S. Army. Dr. Linda Weglicki relocated to another university in May, 2018. The FL VAL Unit hosted their Town Hall Meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 at 4:00 pm, with Project Lead, Dr. Cheryl Krause-Parello, and VAL Unit leader Austin Capers. The meeting was very well attended, with  $N = \leq 31$  participants, including veterans, veterans friends and family, service providers and key community stakeholders. Dr. Krause-Parello was the moderator for the program. The agenda included a greeting and opening remarks by Dean Marlaine Smith from the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, sharing the value of this project for the veteran community, College and University. Dr. Krause-Parello provided a welcome and introduction, discussing the methods of the project and the role and engagement of the CARMs, VAL Unit

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Leaders, with the veterans, veteran's friends and families, clinicians and stakeholders. The project outcomes were presented by Dr. Linda Flynn. Common themes including access to care, coordination of care, polypharmacy, PTSD treatment, sleep disorders, suicide prevention, opiates and addiction were discussed. Dr. Flynn explained how the initial discussions surrounding veteran involvement with research was met with skepticism, however over time they began to understand why their involvement in PCOR and CER activities was so important. Austin Capers, US Army, VAL Unit Leader from Florida, and Lyndon Villone, USMC, VAL Unit Leader from Texas, engaged the audience in a discussion on what it was like to be a VAL Unit Leader on this community engagement project and why it is so important for veterans to get involved in the research enterprise. The final presentation was by Luna Sumer, LCSW, Connecting Veterans with Community. She provided an overview of health-related veterans' resources and community engagement activities in the South Florida. The Town Hall concluded with an active Q & A and networking session. There was excitement around the outcomes of the project with resounding support to stay and or become involved in patient-centered outcomes and comparative effectiveness research with the aim of ultimately improving healthcare for veterans.