



CONNECTING VETERANS & MILITARY FAMILIES TO THE SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY

FY2020 Summary

Successful community integration for veterans and their families requires going beyond addressing crisis, and even the life pillars of employment, housing and health; integration support also needs to offer connections into the community. Effective community integration needs to include participation of the community-- broadly defined. To view it otherwise is to not be responsive to the needs of veterans and to miss an opportunity for the community itself to benefit from the integration of the veterans - and the skills and experiences they bring.

Over the past four years Vets' Community Connections (VCC) has built a model that involves the broader community, filling gaps not addressed by other local veteran service organizations, with the results of veterans gaining access to broader community support and feeling more connected to their community.

VCC fills a clear gap in veteran support, and in this turbulent year our role has been even more important.

In fiscal year 2020, VCC made *over 1400* connections for veterans, military family members and caregivers and we have witnessed a marked increase in requests since the onset of the pandemic. In this 'new normal' internet searches and personal networks often lead to outdated information. Military and veteran families that have never before needed support have turned to VCC to ask for community connections.

In response to the pandemic we identified the following priority areas that augment the personalized connections VCC is known for:

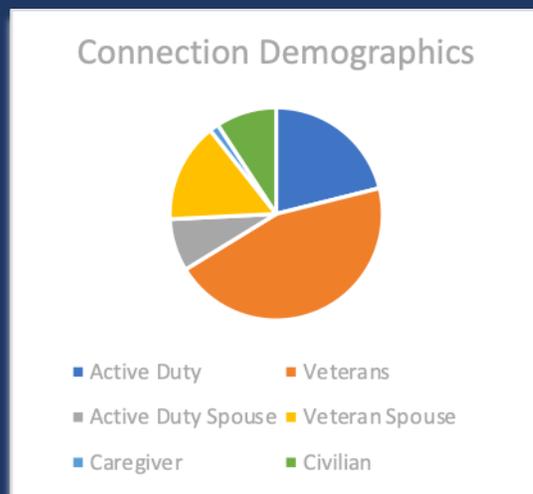
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Assist veterans/military programs in finding needed volunteers and non-monetary donations	Actions: Aggressively promoted opportunities to give back, leading to dozens of San Diegans offering support to organizations such as Dogs on Deployment, masks for USNS Mercy nurses, and STEP food drives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Share accurate and timely information on community resources via social media, newsletters, remote presentations	Actions: Significantly increased our social media presence and sent weekly newsletters to over 1700 people featuring community support offerings available during the pandemic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Link military/veterans with local experts to explore new career opportunities	Actions: Launched monthly "Careers in the Community" webinar featuring speakers from local businesses highlighting career opportunities and advice, as well as local training programs.

Our Work:

This past year we made more than 1400 community connections for San Diego veterans, military and their families. This marked a 41% increase from the year before.

Top VCC topics included:

- **Career development and employment:** Ranging from “What training programs are available to me?” to “Who can I speak with to learn about career avenues in the tech industry?”
- **Recreation and volunteerism:** Ranging from “How can I support military and veterans in my community?” to “What can I do for recreation, even with so many local closures?”
- **Reliable business referrals:** Ranging from automotive resources to home repair.
- **Resources due to economic impacts of pandemic:** Ranging from “Where can I go to find childcare options?” to “As someone who has never needed this, where can I receive food donations?”



Sample Connections:

“I was struggling to figure out what career avenues would be available with my military experience. VCC opened so many doors for me to examine my future.”

- Post 9/11 Army Veteran

“I needed help finishing my degree after my GI Bill benefits had run out. VCC referred me to a program that I was accepted into and now I will get my degree.”

- Post 9/11 Navy Veteran

“VCC gave me resources I wouldn’t have found otherwise. Now I have a better idea of what I can tap into in San Diego.”

- Post 9/11 Army Veteran

“I needed help moving large and heavy furniture into a storage unit. Within two hours of contacting VCC I was connected to movers that donated their time and had great customer service. Thank you VCC.”

- Veteran spouse

“I wanted to do something to help our local military as the pandemic hit. VCC provided me with an opportunity to make masks for nurses on the USNS Mercy. I am thankful I could give back.”

- Navy spouse



VCC works in close collaboration with the following core partners to ensure veterans and military can build thriving lives in San Diego County.

