

Lyon County Community Pledges Support for Military Families and Veterans During Community Covenant Ceremony in September 2010

The sacrifices of military families and veterans — past, present and future — are recognized and valued in Lyon County, Nevada.

That message was delivered in many ways during a “Military Community Covenant” signing ceremony during Healthy Communities Coalition of Lyon and Storey’s September, 2010 meeting.

Community leaders from throughout Lyon County were on hand to sign a “community covenant” that promises Lyon County communities and State and local groups will work together to increase support to the area’s military families and veterans.

Freida Carbery, a Blue Star Mother whose son has served 3 tours in Iraq and is now serving in Korea, said, “We want our military families and soldiers to know that their community values them and will provide resources to support them. We also welcome the talents and skills veterans bring to our communities.”

Support from agencies might include finding additional ways for veterans to be recognized and honored for the countless gifts and abilities they bring to the community, especially in the area of employment (Lyon County has roughly 20% unemployment). Agencies might also assist military families and veterans in this rural county, remote from many VA services, to connect to treatment for traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression, and offer meeting space where they can connect with groups such as Blue Star Mothers and Gold Star Families.

But county, state and federal agencies can only do so much.

That's why Healthy Communities Coalition decided to challenge every sector of Lyon County to show support for military families and veterans. The message is, “Everyone can do something.”

Healthy Communities Coalition director Christy McGill addressed the assembled community leaders and highlighted a few of the people who have been providing support in many different ways.

Leah Compston of Yerington has sent hundreds of care packages to local troops since 2003. When the local National Guard shipped out she made sure every service person was adopted by someone and sent Christmas packages. In Dayton, Dorothy Wingard has led a similar campaign to support troops.

In Fernley, residents help keep the Veteran’s Cemetery spotless to honor military families.

Terresa Hess, who was raised in a military family, and Mary McCandless, whose son Eugene is on his fourth tour of duty, were among those who spent many hours preparing the Boys and Girls Club gym for the covenant ceremony with flowers, ribbons and flags.

An astonishing percentage of the graduating class of the small town of Silver Springs enlisted in the military last year. When military families there said they would like to have potluck dinner meetings to form friendships and to hear updates from military community support groups, Rod Sanchez, director of the Silver Springs Community Center and a member of the Silver Stage Task Force, responded to that need by pledging to open the Senior Center for monthly potluck meetings.

According to McGill, one of Coalition's partners, Army OneSource's community support coordinator Omar Mewborn, made a presentation to the Coalition a few months ago explaining the purpose of the community covenant. McGill said she and Coalition members and partners immediately embraced the project, and the chance to use it as a kick off to developing an action plan among area groups spelling out tangible ways to support military families and veterans in the long term.

Coalition Pledges to Create Action Plan on Further Support: The Coalition will begin crafting a regional action plan on adding additional community support for military families and veterans at its next public meeting on Thursday, Oct. 14. The Coalition members and partners gather for public meetings on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 9am, normally at the Silver Springs Community Center. Input from all sectors of the community is always welcome.

Signers included Civilian Aid to the Secretary to the Army Tyrus Cobb, Lyon County Commissioner Joe Mortensen, Yerington Mayor Doug Homestead, VFW Post 9's Dale Pfaffle, City of Fernley's Shari Whalen, Lyon Human Services Director Edrie LaVoie, Lyon County School Superintendent Caroline McIntosh, Lyon County Manager Jeff Page, Lyon County Sheriff Allen Veil, Yerington Paiute Tribe Education Director Erika Leinda, Oswald Brown of Nevada Army National Guard, Fernley JOIN director Kathy McKnight, Central Lyon Youth Connections board member Donna Alexander, Community Chest's Tamara Burnet, members of the Sierra Nevada 6th Recruiting Brigade, Dale Pfaffle of VFW Post 9, Yerington Police Chief Darren Wagner, Misty Allen of Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention, Omar Mewborn of Army OneSource, Pastor Greg Davies of the Copper Hills Bible Church, Boy Scout Troop 100 leader John Alexander, Mason Valley Boys and Girls Club director Travis Crowder, and dozens of others from throughout the Lyon County area.

Following is a copy of the Community Covenant for the Lyon County, Nevada Area:

Community Covenant to Soldiers, Veterans and Their Families

In acknowledgment of the great gift local military personnel, veterans, and military family members give, local leaders from all walks of life will sign a community covenant pledging to work together towards the following:

Assist military members and all veterans with reintegration into our communities.

Provide assistance to soldiers and their families by advocating for local, state and federal benefits.

Work with community partners to connect soldiers and veterans to services and programs to ensure they are a vibrant, respected and a well-served community.

Connect military family members with both formal and informal community and governmental support throughout the deployment cycle.

Encourage and protect our returning military members by promoting fair and legal employment practices.

Strengthen federal, state, and local collaborations to improve and increase service options for veterans in the Lyon region.

Improve availability of education and training for VA and non-VA service providers in the Lyon region.

For more information about progress on the pledges made in this covenant, please call Christy McGill at 246-7550, or check our Facebook page for updates:
www.facebook.com/healthycommunitiescoalition.