



MCC Supports Military Personnel with Veterans Resource Centers

Middlesex has received a three-year grant from the Ray and Grace Ciccolo Family Foundation to support the college's new Veterans Resource Centers. Now open on the Bedford and Lowell campuses, the centers provide information about college resources, as well as outside support services, to military personnel and their eligible family members enrolled at Middlesex.

"By attending college, veterans can successfully transition from military service to civilian life," said Pamela Flaherty, Dean of Students at Middlesex. "However, veterans may encounter some uniquely challenging barriers along the way. MCC's Veterans Resource Centers can help break down those barriers." As an example, Flaherty cited a Middlesex student whose National Guard unit was deployed overseas on very short notice the week before final exams. He called the Veterans Resource Center, and the college was able to notify his instructors and make special arrangements for him to take his final exams off-site.

MCC's Veterans Resource Centers help Middlesex students access college services such as career and transfer counseling,

disability-support services, and financial-aid information. Working closely with Bedford's Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital and MCC's Career Place in Woburn, the centers also refer veterans to outside services for assistance with health care, the GI Bill, career services and mental-health resources. The centers also provide a place on both Middlesex campuses for veterans to gather and interact with each other.

In addition, the Veterans Resource Centers will offer alternative therapies, such as meditation, acupuncture, massage and yoga, according to MCC Nursing Professor Marie Ryder, who has worked extensively with Bedford's VA Hospital in addressing veterans' health issues. Alternative therapies, especially acupuncture, Ryder explained, have been clinically proven to help individuals who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

"Through the Veterans Resource Centers, we are not only helping our veterans succeed at college, we're also working with them to improve their health and quality of life," said Ryder.

- Kathy Register



Celebrating the opening of MCC's Bedford campus Veterans Resource Center (seated, left to right): Grace Ciccolo and Provost Mary-Jane McCarthy; (standing, left to right) Associate Provost Cynthia Butters, Nursing Professor Marie Ryder, MCC student/veteran Becky Arevalo, and Dean of Students Pamela Flaherty.

For more information about MCC's Veterans Resource Centers, call Rick Reppucci, VRC Coordinator at 781-280-3510.

Or visit:

- Bedford Campus Veterans Resource Center Enrollment Center (Building 9), Room 218
- Lowell Campus Veterans Resource Center City Building, First Floor

Veterans Reap Rewards of New 911-Dispatcher Training Program

As the administrator of a suburban police department, Lexington Police Chief Christopher Casey was grappling with a frustrating pair of problems. First, he faced a high turnover rate among public-safety telecommunications personnel (the 911 dispatchers that answer emergency calls). Many dispatchers were taking the job as a stepping stone to other law-enforcement careers, usually as police officers. Specialized communications training would often be wasted on these individuals.

Second, Casey was concerned about wounded military veterans returning home. He knew that many had hoped to pursue a civilian career in public safety, only to have those dreams derailed by an injury sustained while serving their country. Two problems, one solution.

"My son was a veteran and I was hearing stories about soldiers who had suffered some type of disability and would no longer be able to pursue a career as a police officer," Casey said. "That's when I thought of showing these veterans that there were other career tracks within law enforcement, specifically in emergency telecommunications. At the same time, it would help bring some stability to a vital position that historically suffers high turnover rates."

As an executive with the Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC), Casey is a public-safety ally of Middlesex Community College. He has overseen a NEMLEC computer-training program at MCC that has helped more than 1,200 law-enforcement personnel. During a meeting with Middlesex administrators and

staff from Senator John F. Kerry's office, Casey tossed out a new idea: What if MCC could provide training for emergency-telecommunications personnel specifically targeted toward military veterans? With proper training, these individuals could follow a career track and find jobs as 911 dispatchers – and not just in NEMLEC communities, but throughout Massachusetts.

Senator Kerry's office loved the idea, and a new community partnership program was born. Middlesex obtained support from the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International, the group that provides certification and training for public-safety telecommunicators. Kerry's staff brought in partners from the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, U.S. Department of Labor, and Massachusetts Veterans Services.

With additional assistance from MCC's new Veterans Advisory Board, Middlesex began offering APCO Veteran's Training Program courses last fall, and has helped usher several veterans through the program. "The feedback so far has been strong," said Judy Burke, Dean of Corporate and Community Education & Training. "Many veterans have welcomed the opportunity to develop skills in an area they had not previously considered," she said.

"Middlesex is happy to offer a program that creates opportunities for people who have served our country bravely and suffered losses while doing so," said Burke.

- Patrick Cook



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Police Chief, Lexington



For more information about the APCO Veterans Training Program, contact Program Manager Lisa Tuzzolo at 978-656-3109.