



July 6, 2009

Rockland nonprofit launches new Web site as resource for veterans' support

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NEW CITY - A new Web site launched by VCS Inc. will provide resources for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan to access counseling and talk to other war veterans about their experiences.

The site is part of the nonprofit Vets to Vets program, sponsored by the Volunteer Counseling Service of Rockland County Inc.

Vets to Vets provides free assistance to veterans and their loved ones through counseling for families and couples, parenting and co-parenting group counseling, and support for caregivers, grandparents, the elderly and adolescents.

Veterans may also choose to receive counseling from other veterans.

"One of the real struggles that people are having across the country is getting vets to come in for any kind of supportive counseling. It's so different from the culture of the military, which encourages self-reliance and going on no matter what," said Gail Golden, clinical director of VCS.

But veterans come back from serving in conflict zones with real problems, and they struggle to re-enter society, particularly if they've been on multiple and protracted deployments, she said.

The returning service members have struggled with depression and anger, which manifest themselves in ways that could include domestic violence.

"They're just not managing themselves well on a whole range of levels, and they're carrying so much," Golden said, adding that veterans may come back changed by their experiences.

"There's a real identity turmoil and shift that people struggle with, and it's so helpful to talk that over with another veteran who understands it," Golden said. "Our social idea that people should just come home and pick up exactly where they left off does not square with the real-life experience that veterans are articulating."

The idea for a blog grew out of conversations with veterans who have served as VCS peer counselors, Golden said. The Web site, www.vetsforvetsrockland.org, was then developed through a special grant from state Sen. Thomas Morahan, R-New City.

"We particularly like the idea of the Web site because so many of the people that are serving are of the generation that gets their information (from) the Internet," Golden said.

The site provides news about veterans issues, links to other useful organizations, information about educational opportunities, and a blog.

VCS is a nonprofit based in New City that offers more than 25 community programs, including

counseling and senior services.

Additional Facts

Find out more

- For more information on the Vets for Vets program, visit the Web site, www.vetsforvetsrockland.org, or call VCS at 845-634-5729.
 - A free art workshop for veterans and their families will be at 1 p.m. Saturday at the Rockland Center for the Arts, 27 S. Greenbush Road, West Nyack. For details or to make a reservation, call 845-358-0877.
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