

The Coming Home Project Internship Experience

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COMING HOME PROJECT

Mission

The Coming Home Project was established under the School of Social Work in 2008 to address the needs of our veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The project's mission is: "To recognize and prepare social work students and community practitioners to meet the needs of returning career, reservist, and National Guard military personnel and their families. While remaining invested in social work's historic commitment to work for peace, we are also cognizant of our duty to serve vulnerable populations, such as persons who have experienced combat either directly or indirectly" (Monmouth University, 2022).

Reintegration of Military Personnel into Society

Reintegrating our military personnel back into society is a challenge as their needs are constantly changing overtime. For our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, their needs differ from the generations before them that served in World War I, World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War. In the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year, I conducted a needs assessment on our military-connected students; veterans and dependents at Monmouth University, to gauge what some of the needs are of the generations post-Iraq and Afghanistan eras. Although the size of those surveyed was small, the results indicated an array of needs. Results ranged from needing assistance with managing (1) depression, (2) personal problems, (3) planning for future/goal setting, (4) post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and (5) self-esteem to specific veteran-based needs in the corresponding areas of (1) disability, (2) employment, (3) healthcare, (4) healthcare for family members, (5) medals and records, (6) mental healthcare, and (7) claim appeals.

Over the course of this academic year, as the student intern for the Coming Home Project, I have worked to plan events that targeted some of the indicated areas of need which included TheraPAWS, a Post-Military Career Panel, a PTSD Workshop, and a Mini-Resource Fair for veterans and their families.



Post-Military Career Panel

The Post-Military Career Panel took place on November 16, 2022, in collaboration with the MU Office of Veteran Services. This panel consisted of four former military service members and current professionals from various fields to discuss their transition out of the military and into new careers. The panelists were David Brown (U.S. Air Force and MU Alum), Joni Jaglowski (U.S. Army and MU Alum), David Bess (U.S. Air Force and MU Professor), and Sharon Brown (U.S. Navy Reserve).



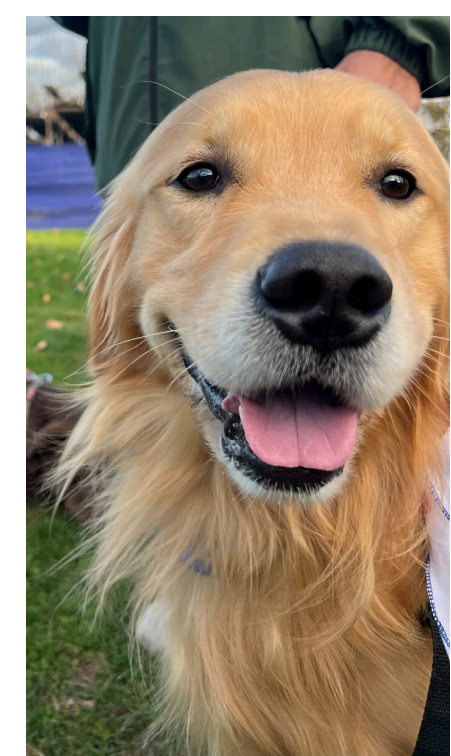
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Challenges to Warriors, Warrior Families & Practitioners

The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Challenges to Warriors, Warrior Families and Practitioners Workshop took place on February 16, 2023, and was presented by Colonel (U.S. Army Retired) Jeffrey S. Yarvis, Ph.D., LCSW, BCD. Colonel Yarvis is a 35-year veteran leader in veteran affairs, executive medicine, clinician, and life-long educator and well-published social work and military scholar in the field of psychological trauma with over 120 peer reviewed publications and Oxford University Press published book called "Combat Social Work." The workshop represented an open discussion from the author's perspective on war and some tales from psychotherapy that illustrate the challenges to warriors, their families, their workplace, and practitioners alike. Reintegration of these warriors to their families, their workplace, and their communities is a challenge that requires the support of care-systems all around them. Note: This event was in-person and broadcasted live via Zoom and offered 1.5 Clinical CE Hours provided by the Monmouth University School of Social Work to the social work practitioners in attendance.



Mini Resource Fair for Veterans & Families

The Mini Resource Fair for Veterans and Families took place on March 29, 2023, in collaboration with 15 agencies. The goal of the event was to showcase several resources of interest to veterans and their families, in addition to educating those that are not a part of the veteran community. MU-based: The NEST, Department of Disability Services (DDS), Counseling and Prevention Services (CPS), Career Development, Community Garden, Multi-Sensory Environment (MSE) Laboratory, and the Office of Veteran Services. Locally-based: Soldier On, NJ Reentry Corporation (NJRC), Association of the US Army (AUSA), Habitat for Humanity in Monmouth County Veterans Build Program, Shore House, Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs, and the Office of Senator Gopal.



TheraPAWS

TheraPAWS took place on November 9, 2022, in collaboration with the MU Office of Veteran Services and Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs. The goal of the event was to use the benefits canine therapy with the military-connected students at MU for a relaxing and fun afternoon.



From left to right, Robin S. Mama, Ph.D., MSW, LSW, Dean of the School of Social Work, Colonel (ret) Jeffrey S. Yarvis, Ph.D., LCSW, BCD, Pamela E. Scott-Johnson, Ph.D., Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Jacklyn Henry, Graduate Student Intern.

Future Goals

During my time as the student intern for the Coming Home Project, I have gained many new skills and further strengthened existing ones. Following my Master's of Social Work, I would like to obtain a job either working in collaboration with a law enforcement agency or continuing to help serve the veteran community at a state or federal level.