

Reporting Hybrid Meeting of 5 December 2022

Calendar of Events

Last Week: 11/28 No Meeting

This Week: 12/5 Veterans & Community Housing Coalition –
Foreverly House
Michelle Viola-Straight

Next Week: 12/12 Holiday Party at the Ballston Town Hall

Coming Up: 12/19 ALL Academy for Lifelong Learning-
Hybrid @ Ballston Town Hall

Note: Regular Meetings are held Mondays at 6:30 pm. Check your e-mail inbox the day of the meeting for the computer Zoom link and password, as well as the phone number you can use to phone in if using your cell phone to participate.

Note: Many Meetings are now hybrid with an in-person option.

Please give suggestions for future programs to Darlene Bower & Peter Sawyer.

Find us at bhblrotary.org and on Facebook

Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves

VCHC – Michelle Viola-Straight

Our speaker is from our neighbor, **Veterans & Community Housing Coalition (VCHC)**. You will recognize the big, yellow house on Route 50 which has been housing female veterans since 1983, and is known as Guardian House. We learned about the soon-to-be-constructed Foreverly House, which will house homeless female veterans and their children.

Michelle Viola-Straight is the Acting Executive Director of VCHC. She is the mother of two sons currently serving in the military. She spoke passionately about the needs of veterans when they transition out of the service. VCHC support services for veterans include outreach to the homeless, or who are at-risk of becoming homeless, intensive short-term case management, financial-literacy training, job-search assistance, and linkage to Federal and other public benefits.

Michelle spoke about the special needs of female veterans – especially those with children. Guardian House is the first and only program for female veterans in the country, but it cannot house women and their children.

Foreverly House has been created with a grassroots effort, partnering with businesses, individuals as well as community leaders and groups. They

have no Veterans Affairs or other government funding. There is no other facility of this kind in New York State.

The goal of raising \$500,000 has been reached and construction will begin soon. Donations such as framing, roofing, painting, HVAC contractors, electricians, plumbing and more have been made. There may be an opportunity for our Rotary Club to provide service work like painting, donations of furnishings, etc.

Michelle told us that 26 female veterans with children have qualified for the Foreverly House. Two families will have the opportunity to live in the facility with a plan for their transition to permanent housing within two years. With the Guardian House close by there can be a peer-to-peer mentoring opportunity. Female veterans range in age from 22 to 92. The new house will be in the back of the property to provide a playground for the children. We will not see it from the road but there are two barns that are visible. These barns hold donations for the families in transition.

There were many more facts presented, and a good question-and-answer session followed. The Veteran & Community Housing Coalition website is www.vchcny.org. The toll-free number is 1-855-233-1117. VCHC serves Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Montgomery, Warren, Washington Counties...

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Contact Linda or/and Sue Stec for Holiday Party details. The location has been changed to the Ballston Town Hall. Limit gifts to \$15 and support local businesses.
- Darlene and Steve Caine presented the idea of creating ambassadors for the Muchila Health-Care Project. A kit of materials explaining the Rotary Global Grant in Zambia is being prepared for the volunteers to be trained in raising the \$50,000 to ship excess and refurbished high-quality medical instruments and supplies appropriate for the project to succeed in saving lives of mothers in Zambia.
- A very successful Holiday Drive-Thru Parade was held with nearly 400 cars participating. Potential ideas were shared for “giving” next year.
- Volunteers worked at Camp Stomping Ground in preparation of our new 4-seasons 4K fund raiser.
- BHBL Rotary is participating in Wreaths Across America on Dec 12 at noon at the Saratoga National Cemetery. Check with Darlene. Several members have signed up to participate.
- Darlene shared thank you notes from the Apple Pie Festival.
- Note: Walter sent his review of the book *Putin's People* by Catherine Belton.

Happy Holidays!

Reported by Mary Anderson