Ten months ago, Kevin Cochrane moved to Eugene. He was living in his truck when he made contact with the Eugene HUD-VASH Team. Five months later, he was housed in his own apartment with a HUD-VASH Voucher but he was still struggling with anger, pain, and depression. He connected with Peer Support Specialist, T.J. Allen, as a member of his HUD-VASH team. "T.J. made a big difference for me," related Cochrane.

Nationwide, the VA employs more than 1100 Peer Support Specialists. A Peer Support Specialist is a Veteran in recovery from mental health or substance abuse challenges who has special training in how to help individuals in their recovery journeys. Peer Support Specialists are trained to use their lived experiences to help Veterans achieve recovery goals. Cochrane recalled a situation where he was in a crisis and T.J. advocated for him and connected him with the care he needed at the VA, “I knew T.J. cared. I felt comfortable and confident talking to him.”

Cochrane is one of the thousands of Veterans nation-wide who benefit from the hard work and expertise of Peer Support Specialists.

Eugene Veteran Finds Hope and Resources through Peer Support

WRAP Classes now Offered in Roseburg and Eugene

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) is a worldwide movement, created and facilitated by mental health consumers learning to re-take control in their own recovery. Group members learn about recovery principles and create a plan that helps them to achieve wellness and manage a crisis when it happens.
In its most simple form, peer support is people helping people who are walking a similar path. Peer support is found in our therapy groups, our waiting rooms, and our Veterans Service Organizations. “Peer support is when two or more people with similar experiences get together in person to share their experiences, to learn together how to move past the difficulties this has created in their lives, to give each other hope, and to support each other as they do the things they want to do and make their lives the way they want them to be.” (Copeland, 2016)


Peer Support

“Peer Support is an opportunity to again help my fallen comrades that society has given up on. No man is left behind.” ~ Glenn Burks, Eugene HUD VASH

“I love being in peer support because it serves ME to assist my Brothers and Sisters to not have to feel alone.” ~ TJ Allen, Eugene HUD VASH

“As a veteran, I enjoy working with veterans. Being a Peer Specialist is a way to give back to those who have given so much to this country.” ~ Layne Ross, RRTP

“It helps my continued growth and I am able to help others” ~ Timothy Brown, RRTP

“I provide Peer Support to keep serving my country and to provide assistance to fellow service members” ~ Jeremy Henderson, Roseburg HUD-VASH

Monthly Recovery Message
—by Keith Lewis, Local Recovery Coordinator

Years ago, I worked in a daily outpatient recovery program with a Veteran who struggled with severe PTSD. He sat in the corner for groups and rarely spoke. As his therapist in the program, I struggled reaching out to him and gaining his trust. One day, I saw him speaking to another Veteran who was making a special effort to reach out to him. Every day the two men would talk, sometimes for just a few minutes, sometimes longer. He gradually began to open up and work toward recovery goals. When I asked, he said that he never felt like anyone understood him, until this Veteran reached out. Then he knew he didn’t have to do this alone. That’s peer support. Sometimes only a Veteran who has walked the same path can understand and reach out to another Veteran. I am inspired by the Veterans who reach out in understanding and support to help their fellow Vets.

Have Feedback? Contact Keith Lewis at the information below.

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