How Can We Address and Prevent Veteran Homelessness in Our Communities?

Our Veterans have risked their lives in-order for our country to enjoy the very freedom we share today. They are our nation's heroes and they should be respected, cared for and embraced. Instead, many Veterans are wandering the streets of our communities, they crave food, jobs, and shelter. They want to live their lives with dignity in the very place they fought to preserve. Veterans need to be tracked from the point of discharge through the relocation into a local community as civilians. We need to address and prevent Veteran homelessness in our communities by creating a sustainable tracking system of education, training and permanent housing.

One way to help prevent Veteran homelessness is through developing a training system that matches a Veteran to a community business partner. The business can match their needs to the Veteran’s skill level and train as required. Veterans can use their G.I. Bills to receive proper training. I watched a Veteran struggle to afford life's simple pleasures. He went from being a soldier to trying to sell car parts. He struggled his whole life without proper training, this man was my grandfather.

Another way to prevent Veteran homeless is through the education of benefits provided through the government for Veterans and businesses. Businesses that hire eligible Veterans can take advantage of a number of tax incentives. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Returning Heroes Tax Credit and The Wounded Warriors Tax Credit can provide a company up to $9,600 in annual incentives. These programs help companies manage their expenses and employ a Veteran. Small business loans and grants are also available to assist a Veteran in becoming a business owner. Veteran business owners could hire additional Veterans and then take advantage of these government tax incentives.

Finally, establishing local Veteran communities with low-income housing is the key to a successful program. The housing can be assessed based on need. Landlords could be given vouchers that guarantee that payment is received. The Veterans could be employed in the housing community to help build, landscape, manage and train. This provides an overall involvement to help manage cost and creates a support system for the Veterans.

By creating business partnerships, low income housing and education of government incentives, Veterans become a vital source in their communities and part of the solution of the homeless.

Amanda Collingham