How can we address and prevent veteran homelessness in our communities?

The issue of veteran homelessness is a complex problem that requires the attention of consistent resolute and preventative measures. In terms of a resolute response, community members can look to the research that has been conducted on high-performing communities, which has revealed how Housing First strategies can be expanded to assure that homeless veterans are efficiently moved into housing. This knowledge had proved so fruitful, that the Department of Veteran Affairs has included it in a variety of their programs and campaigns aiding veterans nationwide.

Another pillar in the struggle to end veteran homelessness has been Congress’s creation of the Support Services for Veteran Families, of which Veteran Affairs has made use. This program is quite crucial in the fight against veteran homelessness because it employs the strategy of funding rapid re-housing of homeless veterans. The campaign also puts efforts towards preventing veteran homelessness through advocacy and awareness-raising.

It is important to note, that in order to address the issue at hand, one must look to the origins of the problem and prevent it from reaching higher levels of severity, ensuring the strength of the country as a whole. The origin, in many cases is a lack of employment for veterans. Fortunately, this obstacle can be addressed with the institution of programs of employment for veterans, assuring that veterans have a source of income and a livelihood, which will in turn prevent them from acquiring the condition of homelessness. If a lack of educational pedigree or degree be the obstacle that prevents veterans from obtaining employment, education should be made more accessible to veterans who so desire it by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Besides the establishment of campaigns or programs by government agencies, it is also important that independent members of communities be aware of this issue, one common to the entirety of the United States, and understand their responsibility as citizens to care for those in the community that are in the position of homeless veterans. One method of instilling this patriotic sentiment in a community is to begin at the source of understanding and growth, the schools. Students in public schools, should be taught about this issue in a manner of honoring the sacrifice that veterans have made for this country that allows them to safely and securely attend school. By doing this, students will gain a greater respect for veterans and hence will be more inclined to become advocates for the issue of veteran homelessness and to participate in fundraising campaigns.

While the Department of Housing and Urban Development Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing Program has been instrumental in providing permanent supportive housing for veterans, the importance of meticulous, thorough, wide-scale local work cannot be undermined. In the end, it is the responsibility of individual citizens and community organizations to assure that all members of their community, especially ones who have given an honorable service to our nation, be respected and given the assistance and care they deserve.