

HARTFORD VET CENTER

Readjustment Counseling Services
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
25 Elm Street – Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 563-8800 [Office]
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June 5, 2020

Dances With Wood

RE: Working with Veterans of the Hartford Vet Center

Hartford Vet Center has continued to work with Dances With Wood to provide veterans the opportunity to meet in community and to work on something for the younger generation. This program has now been going on here since September 2018. During this time, it has served over 16 veterans have been involved in the program, attending a variety of times, creating over 70 contacts since program started. The program called "Heart to Heart" is dedicated to helping disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans by providing an opportunity for veterans to work in community to hand-build and paint wooden toys for hospitalized children who are battling cancer and other serious illnesses. The program has been successful in providing a creative environment that renders the opportunity for the veteran to grow the healthy functioning aspects within their internal system. The program has had ongoing participation by veterans who continue to attend this group on a monthly basis.

The program continues to be held on Saturday mornings and the attendance has been consistent. This program has welcomed veterans of all eras, WWII, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and Post 9/11, male and female. Veterans join over a cooperative adventure and create an artistic wooden toy they can pass on to the next generation. Veterans have learned and developed woodworking hands skills that have positively impacted their self-confidence and self-esteem. The program setting, and facilitation has created a soothing and therapeutic environment that supports creativity and relaxation. Observing and participating in the conversations and creativity that occurs demonstrates the value and healing benefits that have occurred as veterans continue to attend and engage with the same and new program attendees. This program is approaching a year and there continues to be a sense of purpose and meaning to the veteran's quality of life that attend the group. This had led to the program expanding and being a pivotal experience for veterans and their families during a Family Day event held at the Vet Center. During this day, veterans and their families engaged in play with the cars, trucks and race tracks.

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Veterans participated in creative play with their loved ones, creating priceless memories of joy and excitement that validate the benefits of a program like this. It can bring joy and creativity to children in so many ways.

We are glad to have a partnership with Dances With Wood and continue to look forward to future program opportunities with ways that veterans can connect on a level of creativity, with nonjudgmental support to help them to heal from traumatic events they have experienced.

If you would like to discuss this program at more length, I can be reached at (860) 563-8800.

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