

## CONVENTION RECONNECT COMMITTEE MEETING

June 24, 2011

The meeting of the Department Reconnect Committee was called to order by Gary Tanner, Temporary Chairman in Nelson Room of the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on June 24, 2011 at 8:30 AM.

Temporary Chairman Tanner led this assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance and an opening prayer. A moment of silence was observed for deceased committee member James Schutze and Charlie head of the 16<sup>th</sup> District.

### **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN & SECRETARY**

It was moved by Jack Helminski of the 16<sup>th</sup> and supported by Kenneth Pierce Sr of the 7th to elect Gary Tanner as permanent Chairman. Motion carried.

It was moved by Wilson Coomer of the 10<sup>th</sup> and supported by Jack Helminski of the 16<sup>th</sup> to elect James Maki as secretary. Motion carried.

**DISTRICTS:** 5,6,7,10,12,16

**GUESTS:** 2 Guests

### **Minutes:**

The minutes of the 2010 Department Reconnect Convention Committee meeting were read by secretary Maki.

It was moved by Kenneth Pierce Sr. of the 7<sup>th</sup> and supported by Willson comer of the 10th that the minutes of the 2011 Winter Meeting of the Department Reconnect Committee be approved. Motion carried.

### **New Business:**

Reconnect webpage si now up and working on the Department website. The Reconnect Program link is listed under the veteran's services link on the homepage. The Reconnect page contains links to the Elmobility room page as well as other Reconnect resources.

The Reconnect committee and the Michigan Psychological Association Foundation are planning to host a caregiver seminar in September 2011 as part of the Michigan Wounded Warrior Retreat Program.

Chairman Tanner discussed the recent National Guard workshops attended by the Reconnect Committee. Chairman Tanner thanked the committee for their hard work making these a success. Over 200 service members were seen at each workshop.

Elmobility recently attended the 416<sup>th</sup> GNG BN's and the 983<sup>rd</sup> GNG BN's combined family day/change of command ceremony through a military one source referral. Two new requests have come in from Yellow Ribbon workshops and they are scheduled for: July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Battle Creek and August 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Big Rapids.

Jack Helminski requested table top display and table skirt for the Reconnect table during yellow Ribbon workshops and other committee functions.

Chairman Tanner was flown to San Antonio, TX by Army Onesource to attend their first ever community partners forum to help develop new initiatives designed to improve and enhance working support relationship models that can be replicated across the country in response to the joining forces initiative launched by Michele Obama and Jiu Bidon.

Chairman Tanner reported that temp. financial assistance requests were increasing with 5 new requests in the past 2 month. Most dealing with housing costs and eviction prevention.

Jack Helminski reported on 5/3 Banks credit score improvement assistance for service members and veterans.

Chairman Tanner discussed the acquisition of giveaway items for yellow ribbon events. These items would provide more contact with service members and family members attending and would allow added American Legion Branding in service members' homes.

Ray McWilliams discussed his efforts to work the Reconnect program as his district's reconnect chairman. Mr. McWilliams stated that he had made contact with the 125<sup>th</sup> Inf. Unit and has a face to face meeting scheduled for June 29<sup>th</sup> 2011 to discuss the TS2 brochure.

Chairman Tanner discussed the ACO Wounded Warrior Retreat program collection drive for 2011. ACO would like more veteran participation during this year's event. See Adjutant Lafferty's Keeping in Touch for all for the information on their requests.

Chairman Tanner spoke about a request from National regarding H2H and Reconnect success stories. Chairman Tanner will prepare and send in information about the Michigan Reconnect program.

Chairman Tanner passed out Elmobility shirts and pins to the Dept. Reconnect Committee members for use during future events.

Chairman Tanner discussed the need for extra reconnect representation in the northern half of the Lower Peninsula and eastern Upper Peninsula to reduce driving and travel related expenses. This would expand the Department Reconnect committee to 6 members and 1 chairman.

Chairman Tanner expressed his deepest sympathy to Jim Schutze's family to plans to draft a resolution to be heard at the Department of Michigan's 2011 Fall Conference that would establish an Annual Department Reconnect Award named after Jim Schutze. This award would be a lasting and fitting tribute to Jim Schutze and his dedication to serving Michigan's service members, veterans and their families. It would be awarded annually at the Department Convention.

Joseph Levandowski of the Michigan Fallen Warrior Memorial stopped by and spoke about his project to honor all of Michigan's Fallen Warriors since 9/11.

James Maki gave a report of his Reconnect activities in the U.P. (see attached report)

Chariman Tanner stated that he received an emergency request for financial assistance over the phone on Thursday afternoon while here at convention from a National guard

soldier stemming from contact made at a recent yellow ribbon pre-deployment workshop. Due to pre-mobilization training and activation this soldier has lost private income resulting in financial duress. His landlord served this soldier, wife and children with a seven day eviction notice. After consulting with adjutant Lafferty and finance officer Buist, we were able to have Denise Koets cut and mail a check to this family on Friday.

Chairman Tanner spoke about the recent increase in financial assistance requests including recent Heroes to Hometown cases. The Reconnect committee was able to provide \$2000 to assist in the retrofitting of the home of a young Marine who recently lost both legs above the knee as a result of combat in Afghanistan. There were two more H2H cases pending for troops returning home to Flatrock and Gibraltar.

**Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before this committee, it was moved by Jack Helminski of the 16th and supported by Wilson Coomer of the 10th that the meeting be adjourned at 9:35 am. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,

Gary Tanner, Reconnect Committee Chairman  
James Maki, Secretary