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Veterans To Be Honored At Dinner

LIBERAL, KS - The second annual Fall Into Health Fair is just around the corner – the event, with the new name of Community/Veteran Health, Job and Education Fair, is planned for October 23 at the Seward County Activity Center.

One of the many activities planned for the day is a Veteran's dinner.

“All veterans can eat free and others are welcome to eat at the dinner for \$8 per plate,” said event chairperson and Southwest Medical Center Public Relations Director Nancy Kletecka. “Guests will enjoy a meal catered by Billy's Blue Duck BBQ of Liberal.”

This is the first time the now annual event has included a special invitation for veterans.

“Ed Poley of Whirlwind Career Counseling for Veterans and Emergency Responders came to me one day asking advice about a health fair for veterans,” Kletecka said. “Ed was familiar with our event – at that time called the Fall Into Health Fair – and was impressed with the turnout we had last year. It didn't take long before we both knew that a partnership would help us both achieve our goals.”

Poley has been working to secure a guest speaker for the dinner and his efforts paid off.

“Our guest speaker will be Lori Wiersma from the Wichita Veterans' Clinic,” Poley said. “Lori will be speaking about keys to integrate veterans back into society and any benefits that might be available for assistance.”

Poley started Whirlwind Career Counseling in October of 2009. It has been a work from the heart.

“I saw young men and women coming back to our community to a world that had changed - there wasn't any place for them to go and discreetly get assistance,” Poley said. “I felt that my background... because I had walked in their shoes ... would allow me to be in a better position to help them.”

According to Poley the topic Wierma will be speaking to those in attendance at the dinner is very important.

“Whether someone has served in the Guard, the Reserves, or in the active military - they aren't seeing anyone for PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) or depression,” Poley said. “Someone in Wichita told me that every Vet who goes to the VA Clinic there and in Amarillo, Texas, gets automatically screened for PTSD and depression. These are the vets who are there asking for medical assistance in other ways. Once they are identified and accept treatment for their psychological concerns – they have help. But there are many others who have not even been screened for these medical concerns.”

Poley said through Whirlwind, his goal is to be there for all veterans.

“I am trying to help with education and employment concerns,” he said. “There hasn't been anyone out there who they can go to for help and direction. For example, once they get out of the military - if they don't have any idea of what they want to do - they may have the money to pay for school, but they don't have a clue what direction they want to take. I hope to help them with those decisions and with information and direction on other services that are available to them.”

Organizers behind the health, job and education fair are working to help the community and

especially the veterans with all aspects of their health care.

“Healthcare does not just involve the usual testing for conditions like diabetes, cancer, etc.,” said Kletecka. “Your health can be affected by stress created from not having a job or a direction in your life. We have 76 vendors so far for this year who will be offering a number of possible solutions to address all of that.”

The idea behind a special invitation to veterans at the annual fair is simple: “We want to say thank you for your service, welcome home, and ask what can we do for you,” Poley said.

To make your reservation at the veterans’ dinner, call Seward County Health Department at 620-626-3369.

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