

Department Reconnect Committee Meeting
February 21, 2009

The meeting of the Department Reconnect Committee was called to order by Gary Tanner, Chairman at 1 p.m. in Ballroom J of the Causeway Bay Hotel in Lansing, Michigan. The following people were present:

MEMBERS: Gary Tanner, Chairman
James Maki James
Schutze
Wilson Coomer - absent
Jim Maggard - absent Jack
Helminski

GUESTS: 7 present

MINUTES: The minutes from the Fall 2008 meeting were read and a motion was made by Jim Schutze to accept the minutes as read; Support by Jack Helminski; Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS: Chairman Tanner discussed the Post Reconnect Packets that were recommended during the Fall 2008 meeting. Deanna Clark created 50 packets using the information and materials submitted by the committee. We will distribute these at the Reconnect School, and will maintain a supply of packets on hand at Department if any requests are made. Chairman Tanner discussed the prototype of the Department Reconnect brochure, and the information to be posted on the Dept. Website.

NEW BUSINESS: Jim Schutze stated that troops coming home do not have to belong to the Legion to receive assistance. They can contact the Reconnect Committee or go to a Service Officer to request assistance. The troops need help with schooling and medical too. We need to make every effort to help them, and the more people we have out there helping the better.

There was a lot of input about reaching out to stores and local businesses to solicit support for the troops and their families. If we can line up resources prior to receiving requests, it will save a lot of time, and allow for seamless transition assistance.

Chairman Tanner discussed the importance of helping our Troop's and their families with any problems they might encounter from the need for Food, Household Repairs, Child Care, Employment Assistance, Educational Assistance, Financial Assistance and any other needs that we can assist with.

Discussion was conducted regarding the Reconnect Committee Budget for 2009-2010. This year's budget was increased to reflect the increase in activity by the committee, and through the creation of a special assistance fund to be administered by the V. A. & R. committee. We will need some additional funds to continue moving this committee forward.

Operation Outreach DVD is being used by the Reconnect Committee when conducting presentations and open houses. This DVD stresses reconnecting with all who serve on

active duty or in the National Guard and reserve forces, and in doing so, we discover young families with different needs than we had when we wore the uniform but the today's American Legion family programs are designed to meet these needs.

Commander Anderson visited and relayed his appreciation for the work being performed by the Reconnect Committee, and then excused himself.

Chairman Tanner stressed the need to build Reconnect contacts. Some examples are: Service Officers, Family Readiness Groups, County Veterans Trust Fund Officers, Michigan Military Family Relief Fund, local Vet Centers, local VA hospitals, Children and Youth programs and local media and business contacts.

Chairman Tanner stressed that we always need to remember to thank the people or businesses that help the Reconnect Committee by supporting our Troops, our Veterans and their families. A simple thank you whether a certificate, plaque, media recognition, or a plain old handshake!

Chairman Tanner discussed the upcoming PBS Special, "Coming Home; Military Families Coping with Change." That will air on Wednesday April 1st 2009 at 8:00pm. The Reconnect Committee was able to request and receive one of a limited number of "Sneak Peek" pre-screening kits, and it will be shown on Thursday March 26th 2009 at the Dearborn Henry Ford Centennial Library Auditorium at 6:30pm. The Reconnect Committee was also able to secure one of five Sesame Rooms offered nationwide to the American Legion through the Sesame Workshop program by sponsoring the Michigan Military Moms Organization. These rooms are designed to be used as a safe playroom environment by the children of our Military Families. They are valued between \$8,000.00 and \$10,000.00, and contain everything needed to set up a Sesame themed playroom. We would like to purchase an enclosed motorcycle trailer and use it to transport this room around to the many different Guard and Reserve units when needed. Logo decals on the trailer for the American Legion, Sesame Workshops and the Michigan Military Moms would provide instant recognition that we are there for our troops and their families.

James Maki gave a report from the 5th zone regarding their visits to local Legion posts to talk about our Reconnect program, and to hand out TS2 brochures.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before this committee, motion by Jack Helminski and supported by Jim Schutze that the meeting be adjourned at 2:15 p.m.
Motion carried

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

GARY TANNER
DEPARTMENT RECONNECT CHAIRMAN