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Happy Mother's Day



Sunday, May 13, 2018

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These moms are on a mission

Giving Back fundraiser set for Saturday at Paddock Park

By Andy Fillmore
Correspondent

Melanie Henson and Penny Hatfield are two moms on a mission.

These residents of the Paddock Park South adult community have children in the armed services and law enforcement. They want to spark a deeper appreciation and respect for those who protect and defend communities and the country, and

to see all soldiers and law enforcement embraced with the same caring and concern they have for their own children.

To further their goal, Hanson and Hatfield have been organizing a daylong event called Giving Back, which will be held Saturday at the community in southwest Marion County.

The event will spotlight the sacrifices of soldiers and law enforcement, and organizers will gather donations for Marion County Veterans

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Melanie Henson goes through some of the items that have been donated for the Giving Back event she and friend Penny Hatfield have organized. It will take place 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday at the Paddock Park South Community Center. The two recently teamed up to gather blankets for homeless and needy veterans, along with raising funds for local law enforcement. One of Henson's sons is a police officer in Pennsylvania and Hatfield's son is in the Army and just deployed for his third tour in the Middle East. (DOUG ENGLE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

Helping veterans get back to work

CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion is on the job

By Carlos E. Medina
Staff writer

Lisa Reynolds sometimes jokes that she was so close to being homeless that she had one foot out the door. The U.S. Army veteran has never forgotten the dread she felt for herself and her young children during those dark days.

"It was a very scary situation to have two children under the age of 5 and be in that predicament. Ever since that time it's been a mission of mine that no one else goes through that," Reynolds said.

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Career Resource Guide

See the Star-Banner's annual guide inside today's newspaper

RISING SEAS

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VETS

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She now works with CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, which helps homeless veterans get back into the workforce. It kicked off in August, thanks to a federal grant, and so far includes 67 veterans. Almost a third are now working; the others are moving toward that goal.

"With the chronically homeless, you run into mental health and substance abuse issues; this group is no different," Reynolds said.

The program assesses applicants and refers them to other programs that can help with their underlying issues. Reynolds keeps track of their progress and, when they are ready, helps pay for skills training or on-the-job training with employers.

"Whatever it takes, I'm willing to put forth that effort to get them to the point where they are job ready. We'll send them back to school, get them paid training, resume help, clothing," she said.

Roy Daniel took advantage of the program and now is working to help other vets. Daniel served in the U.S. Marine Corps for seven years. When he got out he became a welder and had a steady job. But a divorce and his demons got the better of him, and he ended up homeless.

Daniel quit drinking and smoking a few years ago while staying at the Ocala Ritz Veterans Village. Last year, he applied to the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, which worked out an eight-week paid training post with the Veterans Village that turned into a permanent position. Daniel does outreach to try and get other homeless vets off the street.

"CareerSource gave me the opportunity and I am so grateful," Daniel said. "It's a great feeling. I help a lot of veterans who are homeless. I understand where they are at, and that helps."

Veterans interested in the program can contact Reynolds at 732-1700, ext. 1273, or lreynolds@careersourceclm.com; or Lori Jean Ebert at 732-1700, ext. 1124, or lebert@careersourceclm.com.

They also can visit the CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion office at 2703 NE 14th St., Ocala, Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.