



Returning soldiers' needs to be studied

JUSTINA WANG • STAFF WRITER • APRIL 24, 200

The Rochester Veterans Outreach Center will lead a two-year study through upstate and western New York

<<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080424/NEWS01/804240386/1003>> to recommend programs and policies to help returning soldiers.

The project, funded in part by a \$372,430 New York State

<<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080424/NEWS01/804240386/1003>> Health Foundation grant announced Tuesday, will offer the most comprehensive look at veterans' needs in New York, said Ellen Warren, vice president of development for the Veterans Outreach Center.

"This is a huge undertaking," Warren said. "It's a recognition that military- and combat-related illnesses are a public health issue. As a community, we need to come together to help these men and women and their families reintegrate into the community."

Later this month, representatives from the Veterans Outreach Center and other organizations upstate will begin traveling through the area to interview veterans and leaders of community service agencies. The Operation Welcome Home & Recovery project focuses on finding barriers that returning soldiers face, like long waiting lists to get to the Department of Veterans Affairs or lack of transport and mental health services

<<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080424/NEWS01/804240386/1003>> , Warren said.

Project leaders will make recommendations to state lawmakers and work with community representatives to develop partnerships and programs.

James Knickman, president and chief executive officer of the New York State Health Foundation, said funding programs for veterans in upstate was much needed, especially with the military's Fort Drum in Watertown.

"The more we look into this issue, the more gaps we find," he said. "These veterans that are coming back to our country are not getting the services they need."

Though New York has traditionally struggled with services for veterans, Rochester has offered wide-ranging programs that link organizations such as the Red Cross <<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080424/NEWS01/804240386/1003>> , the Anthony L. Jordan Health Center and the V.A., Warren said.

The Rochester

<<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080424/NEWS01/804240386/1003>> Veterans Outreach Center was selected to lead the study because of its long history as a "national leader and model" of providing services to returning soldiers, Knickman said.

The grant from the New York State Health Foundation is part of a \$2 million initiative to improve services for returning U.S. service personnel throughout the state.

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