



# the Green sheet

## Honoring Veterans

The day after Veterans Day, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Chairman Michael Green showcased the efforts of the Board to assist veterans who are involved in the criminal justice system.

Green was a keynote speaker at the Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association veteran's conference, "Honoring the Sacrifices, Partnering to Support Justice Involved Veterans" which was attended by veteran advocates and criminal justice professionals.

"The Board is proud to support veterans who have rendered and continue to render service to our country," stated Green. "We have approximately 2,000 veterans on parole supervision that we are dedicated to helping change their lives."

Many service members have untreated issues stemming from their military experience that can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may also have traumatic brain injury, mental health issues and drug and alcohol co-occurring disorders.

"It is important that our agents have an understanding of these issues when supervising veterans on parole," said Green. "We raised awareness of veteran's unique needs and have trained our staff in specific areas."

The Board trained 742 employees on topics to improve assistance to veterans, such as how to obtain a copy of discharge papers and apply for VA benefits; created a veteran brochure which explains services they may be



Board Chairman Michael Green makes opening remarks.

eligible for and contact information for VA medical centers; developed a veteran's support page on its website; and all agents have received mental health first aid training, which teaches individuals to recognize and respond to symptoms of mental illness.

The Board has agents that work with VA Medical Centers and VA Reentry specialists around the state in Lancaster, Chester, Butler, Pittsburgh, Altoona, Philadelphia and Scranton. They have developed relationships with staff at VA Medical Centers, attend team meetings and built a knowledge base about services available in the community for veterans who complete the VA program.

Through their knowledge of programs in the community and the requirements of the VA, they can ensure suitable places to live that are conducive to successful reentry. In addition, the Board performs outreach with government and non-government organizations that provide support to veterans and their families.

“It is important to recognize all the hard work and dedication of our staff in support and rehabilitation of veterans on supervision,” Green said.

The Board and Department of Corrections established Veteran Service Units (VSU) to better prepare veterans for reentry while they are still in prison. VSUs are staffed by corrections officers, psychology staff, treatment specialists, a veteran coordinator, social worker and Reentry Parole Agent.

VSUs focus on PTSD, life skills, traumatic brain injury, anxiety disorders, depression, substance abuse issues and homelessness.

“VSU’s provide an environment that allows veterans to bond with one another through shared experiences unique to veterans,” said Parole Manager Krista Callear. “They have a common background regardless of the branch of service.”

Currently, VSUs are located at SCI-Pittsburgh and SCI-Dallas with 48 bed units and 156 bed units, respectively.

Callear, along with DOC staff, participated in a break-out session at the event that discussed the efforts of the two agencies to educate, provide resources, and offer reentry assistance to Pennsylvania’s incarcerated and paroled veterans.

“The collaborative effort between the two agencies has been very beneficial,” said Callear.

Other keynote speakers included PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) Chairman Josh Shapiro and PA Department of Corrections (DOC) Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal.