

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

100 Years & Three Generations of Seabees Celebrate a Victory Over Veteran Homelessness

Leading veteran organization now providing vehicles to get veterans back to work

Camarillo, CA June 4, 2020 – US Navy Seabees from the past and present, along with the County's leading veteran services organization will present a vehicle to a formerly homeless veteran, enabling him to rejoin the workforce and move his life forward. "Seabees" are the Navy's hard-nosed construction crews that build critical forward operating bases and create infrastructure, in battlefield conditions and often under enemy fire. **Ben Preston** was a Navy Seabee who served in Iraq, Somalia and Kenya. After his service, Ben's drinking had de-railed his life and left him homeless. Gold Coast Veterans Foundation (GCVF) got Ben engaged into services, and on a path toward sobriety.

"The entire concept of our comprehensive integrated care model is that every veteran's problems, needs, interventions, and solutions are different... you can't rescue and repair one part of a veteran's life and then send them out the door with best wishes," says GCVF's Executive Director **Bob Harris**; "Ben initially needed one type of care because he had become homeless, and then another type of care to address the issues that put him in that position. But after he became sober, and ready to go back to work, then we realized that there was another crucial barrier to achieving independence."

Harris, who has led GCVF's creation of the comprehensive integrated care model, the first of its kind in Ventura County, is justifiably proud of how this unique model looks at the whole picture of repairing a life. Says Harris, "Ben needed reliable, personal transportation to be employable. Fortunately, when he was ready to go back to work we were able to provide him with a car that had been recently donated to us by a veteran family."

Saturday's vehicle presentation will be all the more poignant for other reasons; it's the 76th anniversary of the D-Day landings on Normandy Beach, the beginning of the end of World War 2. On hand will be **Bill Mors**, a razor sharp 97 year old WW2 veteran Seabee (who built the landing strips and forward bases that helped win WW2 in the Pacific), and **Jaimeson Sammons**, a Seabee on active duty in Port Hueneme. Sammons and his wife just welcomed a newborn son, who he proudly predicts will eventually become a Seabee. Sammons' son could very well be serving with future Seabees on the 100th anniversary of Bill Mors' WW2 service. **Dennis Murphy**, a 24 year Navy veteran, Submarine Captain and Squadron Commodore, current VP of Business performance at Amgen, and GCVF Board Chair, will preside over the event. The presentation will be made at the Ventura County Community Foundation – **VCCF**.

Saturday's presentation also formally launches GCVF's vehicle donation program. Safe, running vehicles can be donated to get veterans like Ben back to work. Travel trailers, camping trailers, mobile homes, and motor homes will be directly used for emergency housing for homeless veterans. "It's frustrating that well-meaning people donate vehicles to an annoying radio commercial..." says Harris. "The cars are sold for pennies on the dollar, and the charity may wind up with a few hundred bucks. Vehicles donated to Gold Coast Veterans Foundation will directly be used as emergency housing to prevent homelessness, or as transportation to get a veteran back to work. Our donated vehicles make un-housed veterans into housed veterans, and turn taxpayer burdens into taxpayers."

Time & Location: 10:30 a.m., Saturday, June 6, 2020 at the Ventura County Community Foundation Building located at 4001 Mission Oaks Blvd. Suite D, Camarillo California.

About Gold Coast Veterans Foundation – The leading non-profit serving veterans in Ventura County, GCVF provides a "one-stop" resource center connecting veterans with benefits and comprehensive care. Nine core in-house programs intervene to disrupt the root causes of suffering, homelessness and poor life outcomes. These include mobile veteran outreach, case management, health care, job training & placement, workforce development, shelter/housing services, counseling, and wellness. All services free of charge. <http://www.gcvf.org> (805) 482-6550