



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senator Metzger Secures Funding in State Budget to Expand Veterans Peer Support Program to Ulster and Sullivan Counties

JEN METZGER April 21, 2020

| ISSUE: [JOSEPH P. DWYER VETERAN PEER SUPPORT PROJECT](#), [VETERANS AFFAIRS](#)



Hudson Valley and Catskills, NY... Senator Jen Metzger (SD-42) was able to secure funding in the 2020-2021 State Budget to expand the widely lauded Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Project to Sullivan and Ulster Counties, which will provide peer-to-peer counseling and support to veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, and other mental health issues. Senator Metzger also successfully advocated for restoring full funding to existing Dwyer programs, including Orange County's highly successful [Vet2Vet](#) program.

"The Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Project is one of New York's best programs to assist and support veterans suffering from the invisible wounds of war and can save lives," **said Senator Metzger.** "I fought hard for this program in this year's budget, and I am thrilled that veterans in Sullivan and Ulster Counties will now be able to benefit from this model program, as veterans in Orange County have. Having access to these peer-to-peer resources is particularly important in rural communities, where isolation is a greater problem and a significant contributing factor to higher suicide rates. Our veterans have served our country bravely and sacrificed for us, and we owe it to them to provide them with the support and services they need to thrive."

The Dwyer Project began in 2012 as a pilot partnership between the Suffolk County United Veterans Program and the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency and has been so successful that the program has been extended to 23 counties across the state, thanks to state funding. At a February [press conference](#) in Albany, Senator Metzger joined members of the Senate's Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee in calling for funding in this year's state budget to extend the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project to other counties.

Pat Ryan, Ulster County Executive said, "Expanding the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Project to Ulster County is a direct result of Senator Metzger advocating for this much-needed funding in the 2020-2021 State Budget. Between fighting to expand the Dwyer Vet2Vet program and her office's veterans resource fair event series around the region, Senator Metzger is a strong ally for veterans, active service members, and their families, and I am confident that the services provided in Vet2Vet outreach will greatly benefit those most deserving of direct support."

John Crotty, Director, Sullivan County Veterans Service Agency said, "All of us in the Sullivan

County Veteran community are very appreciative of Senator Metzger's work to expand resources available to our Veterans. The Vet2Vet program will be especially helpful in connecting with our veterans and delivering services to those who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Nadia Allen, Executive Director, MHA in Orange County, Inc. said, "We are honored to have Ulster and Sullivan counties join the ranks of the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Mentoring and Support Program. These counties are now poised to serve their veteran community in the best ways possible as a result of this funding. We commend Senator Metzger for her demonstrated leadership on these important issues. With the VA reporting that an estimated 22 veterans a day are lost to suicide, expansion of the program is long overdue."

Everett Cox, Vet Peer, Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program in Orange County said, "I did not know, when I started working for the Dwyer program, that lonely old vets - from WWII, or Korea or Vietnam - or their caregivers - would hold my hand while crying and call me their angel. I did not know that my war experience or suicide attempts would give vets the freedom to speak about their war experiences and suicidal thoughts. I did not know there were so many homeless and hungry vets in Orange County. I did not know the need for Vet2Vet would be so great or that it would change my life so much, and I'm so glad to see the program expand to other counties in the region. They will surely benefit from it."

Metzger's Veterans Resource Fair event series, that ran from late 2019 through February, connected active duty service members, veterans of any branch of the U.S. Military, and their families with information and resources tailored to their needs. As they received legal, financial, housing and health related support from participating service organizations, attendees praised the Vet2Vet program to Metzger and her staff.

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