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Subject: Philadelphia Network of Care – 'Connecting the Dots for Veterans'

Connecting the Dots for Veterans

Don Sapatkin, *Philadelphia Inquirer* Staff Writer
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Just four days after coming home to Northeast Philadelphia from Iraq in 2003, Tim Wynn got into a bar fight. The Marine was arrested for the first time in his life.

That wasn't even the worst of it.

"I can remember, my mother and my girlfriend at the time, now my wife, they didn't know what to do," he said. It took five years and six more arrests before he began court-ordered treatment for the PTSD that he didn't know he had.

His homecoming might have been easier if he could have had access to a new website for Philadelphia-area veterans that went live Monday.

It has 200,000 pages of searchable local resources - legal clinics, housing, job openings specifically for veterans - and tens of thousands more about medical conditions, insurance, and veterans organizations. There are 30,000 pages on assistive devices alone. A diagram of a human lets you click on body parts to begin seeking information about what might be wrong. A keyword search for bills in Harrisburg - "disability" finds 25 bills - allows you to e-mail legislators involved in the effort.

The site is the [first local version of www.networkofcare.org](http://www.networkofcare.org) for veterans in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Philadelphia hosts sibling sites for inmates released from prison; every Pennsylvania county has one for people with mental health questions.

They were built by Trilogy Integrated Resources L.L.C., a San Rafael, Calif., company that began the local-links concept in its home state more than a decade ago. The early adopters spent millions of dollars developing the sites, Bruce Bronzan, president of Trilogy, said at a City Hall news conference, at which he demonstrated the veterans' website Monday. The local host, the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, paid a \$10,000 setup fee; maintenance costs were waived.

Even caseworkers would not otherwise have access to many of the links on the site, Bronzan said. Veterans don't know that many of the services are out there.

"How does somebody find things when they don't even know that they exist to look for?"
" Bronzan said.

Organizations that work with veterans sounded sold.

"This website is going to be huge for us in Philadelphia," said Amanda Rondon, local captain for Team Red White and Blue, a nonprofit whose mission, according to its website, is "to enrich the lives of America's veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity."

Others said the site would fill in the gaps that exist between services for veterans. Some said they expected it to be particularly useful for Vietnam veterans, because they served at a time when help was particularly scarce.

"Pride gets in the way" of simply walking into a VA hospital and saying you need help, said Wynn, the Iraq War veteran, who now works as a certified peer specialist for the city's behavioral health department.

A website is different.

"I can't stress how important this is," said Wynn, 35. "In the privacy of your own home, you'll say, 'Well, let me take a look.'"

If you have any questions or would like a more in-depth demonstration of how the Network of Care works, please contact me anytime at Afshin@trilogyir.com or (415) 458-5900.

Thank you,

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