


SARGE'S VETERAN SUPPORT

NORTH OLYMPIC REGIONAL VETERAN'S HOUSING NETWORK

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North Olympic Regional Housing Network was established to aid low-income people to secure housing and homes through land acquisition. In 2009, the non-profit was repurposed to focus on housing the homeless Veterans of Clallam and Jefferson Counties and was rebranded as North Olympic Regional Veteran's Housing Network. It was our purpose to create a shelter for homeless Veterans, and become a hub for Veteran Resources. Since 2011, we have created two permanent supportive housing projects, a secondhand store and Farmstand. Our goal is empowerment for our Veterans and sustainability for our program.

We knew that there were Veterans that could never come indoors, we knew that there were Veterans living within substandard conditions... who lacked power, water, or septic, and we wanted to honor THEIR choices. We wished to be there for them when they needed us, but we knew that we must come from where the client is coming from, not our judgment or choice of where they should be. No one will change their behavior if forced. No one will change their lifestyle or behavior if they are suffering from severe chronic mental illness without inner awareness.

We deeply believe in our Veterans. We deeply believe in our purpose. We deeply believe in crafting real change within our County for our Veterans and how Veterans are viewed within our community. And so we began.

North Olympic Regional Veteran's Housing Network (NORVHN) secured a Sen. Murray \$500k appropriation which allowed us to purchase and remodel a 2-story apartment building in Forks, WA, creating "Sarge's Place", our homeless Veterans interim housing program. We then secured a Department of Veterans Affairs "Health Care for Homeless Veterans" contract which pays a stipend per Vet per night that reside within our shelter. Our mission is to heal the wounds, to restore dignity, hope and self-sufficiency to all homeless Veterans in need and to significantly reduce homelessness and poverty among our local Veterans.

A few years after we opened Sarge's Place, we were seeing an influx in the number of homeless Veterans with children. So, in 2013 we secured \$500k from the Washington State Department of Commerce Housing Trust Fund to purchase and remodel an apartment building in Port Angeles, Washington which houses disabled, homeless Veterans and their families – "The Outpost". This project is permanent supportive and comes with a VA Social Worker attached to the families.

A few years later we began to see an uptick in the number of Veterans who needed extra care in the form of advocacy and driving them to medical appointments...but these Veterans were single. So in 2014 we purchased the house and property across the street from Sarge's Place and named it "Camp Sol Duc". This 1.3 acres of land includes a 3-bedroom house and double car garage. We currently rent to two disabled Vets whose rent pays our mortgage each month while we continue to case manage those tenants. We have also created a massive garden/small farm with greenhouse, chickens, and fruit trees. The homeless Veterans tend the gardens and eat the produce.

We then built a freestanding building “Sarge’s Farmstand” where we are selling our excess produce, as well as pairing up with organic farms within our area to create support for our local farmers and sustainability for our program.

Also at Camp Sol Duc, we have a secondhand store within the double car garage of the main house. It is through this location that we sell antiques, collectibles, household items and furniture to the general public. We also use this as a source of household items for our Veterans moving from our shelter to permanent housing within our community.

Future plans for this same property include an 8-plex apartment building for single Veterans moving out of our shelter and into permanent supportive housing, a metal working shop, woodworking shop, outdoor welding area, extensive flower gardens (for sale for weddings and arrangements) as well as an expanded and creating a freestanding Sarge’s Attic (secondhand store) building which will accommodate a coffee roastery, coffee bar, rental loft area and retail space. All of these projects have been and will be grant driven.

It is through this property that we will create supportive employment for our Veterans, sustainability for our program, economic development for our depressed region and HOPE for our Veterans. We also currently have an active GoFundMe account to create a 7-bedroom ranch style home for disabled Agent Orange exposure Veterans upon this property as well.

We have housed 164 Veterans since 2011, 15 partners/spouses, 31 children, and hundreds of Veterans within Clallam County whom have requested referrals, direction or assistance from our Staff. We are the bastion of Veteran support within our region. We have grown our knowledge base to serve those around us and we are a trusted agency within our community.



Sarge's Place (middle top) with Camp Sol Duc where the double garage serves as the secondhand store Sarge's Attic, and Sarge's Farmstand is on the right. (Drone photo by Bob McIntyre)