



Senior Services Plus receives award for Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies Program

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On Saturday, April 18th, 2015, Senior Services Plus was recognized as the recipient of the AllenForce Diamond Award. According to AllenForce, the non-profit agency was awarded due to its “Dedication, Determination and Drive”.

AllenForce’s mission is “To promote a healthy and successful lifestyle for all veterans

of all eras of the United States Armed Forces and their families by providing positive networking, fitness and recreational opportunities and community events. AllenForce strives to bridge the gap between military and civilian life as veterans face an ever-changing adjustment process after serving our nation”.

Senior Services Plus was recognized for licensure of key personnel through AllenForce’s Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies Workshop both in 2013 and 2014. Devon Neal, SSP’s Community Based Services Director, oversees the grants, planning and reporting of the program. Tiffany Lubinski, Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies Coordinator, handles all day-to-day coordinating with the veterans. The non-profit also has two Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies trainers working with the veterans within the fitness center.

In 2013, Senior Services Plus received a cash grant from the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs which made offering the Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies program possible. Senior Services Plus has received this grant for two consecutive years giving them a unique opportunity to expand and grow the program into what it is today. As a Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies Licensed Facility, Senior Services Plus offers a free health club membership to veterans with a 10% disability rating or health need and one free membership to a person of their choice (battle buddy), personal training sessions and monthly networking events to veterans and their loved ones-grant funds permitting. In Alton alone, they have served 52 veterans in the past two years and currently have a waiting list of about 50 for the next program year beginning in July. According to Donna Allen-Sebok, President of AllenForce, “creative new special event programming has started above and beyond the program model”.

“They have had wait lists for veterans to get involved and through their other special events and outreach, have served hundreds of veterans,” said Allen-Sebok. “Some of their additional veteran programming includes a monthly Veteran Coffee Chat, which brings in speakers to share about resources in the community specifically geared at veterans and which facilitates a forum for veterans to share with each other.”

Neal feels that since beginning the program at Senior Services Plus, she has observed so much improvement with each individual enrollee.

She added, “It has been incredible to see how once they begin opening up, the healing starts in ways we could not have imagined. We have a family team in our veterans. They support each other and get to know each other’s families and are there for one another when life comes to a stand-still with illness and death. They have found the bond again with other veterans that they once had out in the field or in the service office. The entire program is amazing and humbling to witness.”

Some of the veterans are now volunteering in our Senior Corp Foster Grandparent

Program as mentors and tutors in area schools and Achievement Centers. Veterans also have the opportunity to help at the center as volunteers and participate in outreach as a team. The newest project of volunteering is at the local Juvenile Detention Center at Pere Marquette.

The Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies participants also go bowling, fishing, skeet shooting, go to the drive range. The social networking events often connect them with an activity that has been lost due to ailing health, or isolation.

The Senior Services Plus staff continues to seek learning opportunities about military and veteran culture. In July of 2014, the staff participated in the IL National Guard Training with Illinois Joining Forces to provide sensitivity training for civilians as to what it is like to be in the military. Boot camp exercises, weapons training, IED identification, and more were introduced. The HMHB program coordinator and personal trainer accomplished this two-day course in Marseilles, Illinois.

Donna added, “Devon Neal is right on time with data reports and photos to share regarding the program. A true partner in service, SSP is an inspiration and amazing role model to other Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies licensed facilities.”

Senior Services Plus is located at 2603 North Rodgers Avenue in Alton. The agency is currently accepting veterans of any conflict with at least a 10% disability rating to the 2015 Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies program. Anyone interested in the program is encouraged to contact Tiffany Lubinski at 618-465-3298 ext. 109 or email tlubinski@seniorservicesplus.org.