



## LANCASTER COUNTY VETERANS COURT PROGRAM “LANCASTER BARRACKS”



### The Veterans Court Program

Veterans Court is a 5 year old treatment court in the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas led by Judge Jeffery Wright which provides veterans in the criminal justice system, charged with certain crimes, an individualized treatment program based on proven national research and program models. Veterans in the program are under close Court supervision and must fully comply with all Court requirements, including drug and alcohol and/or mental health treatment, community service, plus pay all fines, costs or restitution associated with their misdeeds in order to graduate.

Once participants complete this program, typically over 12 months, they have an opportunity for their charges to be dismissed or their sentences reduced, and with the right kind of help, can live normal lives once again. At any one time, there are approximately 4x the number of veterans in the County Prison than the general population. In addition to the personal success for the veteran and their families, the community benefits as well. The program is much more cost effective than traditional incarceration. It costs approximately \$25,000 on an annual basis to incarcerate someone as opposed to approximately \$3,100 in the Veterans Court Program. Based on the minimum sentences at the estimated daily jail cost, participation in Veterans Court has **saved taxpayers \$274,000 in prison costs**. In addition, participants have **paid over \$103,000 in fines, costs and restitution to date**.

### A Need for our Veterans

Stable housing is an essential element of success for participants in the Veterans Court program. Unfortunately, it has also proven to be a persistent and growing challenge for many of the participants. To date, Court participants in need of housing have typically used the resources of TLC's Veterans Victory House in Lancaster City for which we are grateful. However, as the demand for the Court continues to grow, so has the need for affordable, stable housing. Victory House is no longer sufficient alone, and alternative resources have proven difficult to identify.

To address this rapidly emerging need, key community partners have come together to develop a unique solution, “The Lancaster Barracks.” Through a partnership with the **Veterans Court Community Partnership (VCCP) of American Legion Post 34**, the non-profit **Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership (LHOP)** and **CAPital Workforce** (a program of the Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County), a vacant dilapidated house within Lancaster City will be purchased and rehabilitated into a home that will accommodate up to three Veterans Court participants at a time in the advanced phases of the program.

Graduates and current participants of Veterans Court have committed to volunteer to rehab the house aka “sweat equity,” along with CAPital Workforce and other partners who will provide time, skills training and materials. Through this combined effort we will be able to keep the cost reasonable and the project sustainable for the future. Some of the veteran participants will have the opportunity to be hired full-time with CAPital Workforce to continue their apprenticeship training in order to be hired by private contractors, small and large, for a rewarding career in the construction trades, something our employers in the community need.

The “Barracks” will be owned by LHOP, managed by a professional property manager and administered within the rules of the Veterans Court program. Resident participants will be required to pay a monthly fee while living in the house to help cover costs, and on a rotating basis will be the resident leader with supervision by the Program. Lancaster County Adult Probation and Parole, and Veterans Court will select participants that qualify for quarters in the Barracks. It will give resident participants another step toward healing, accountability and independence. The location sought is ideal in that will be within walking distance of the Probation and Parole Department, the Courthouse, transportation and other services. The Barracks will also be a part of a neighborhood being revitalized through a resident leadership team backed by LHOP.

### **How You Can Help**

The mission is clear, the plan is set, the partnerships have been formed, and the veterans are ready to get to work to make the Lancaster Barracks a reality...the only thing we need now is funding and donations of materials. **The goal is to raise \$100,000** to acquire, rehab and start a capital fund for future maintenance of the Lancaster Barracks, and possibly the acquisition of another house. **Once we have 50% of the goal secured, we will purchase the house and begin work to accomplish the mission.**

*Our request to you is to help lay the foundation of the house through an investment in the Lancaster Barracks for Veterans Court.* All contribution sizes are welcome and will be acknowledged, however, contributors who invest **\$1,000** or more will be listed on a “wall of honor” in the house. We are also interested in a talking with a partner who may wish to provide a significant contribution for naming rights. Donation checks should be made payable to the “**LHOP**” and place “**Lancaster Barracks**” in the memo line. Contributions to the project through LHOP are tax deductible as an approved IRS 501(c)(3) charitable organization and should be mailed to LHOP, 123 E. King St., Lancaster, PA 17602.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to support veterans in a proven effective program. Questions or donations of building materials can be directed to Ray D’Agostino, VCCP Treasurer and CEO of LHOP at rdagostino@lhop.org or (717) 291-9945 ext. 104.

*Christopher Mattson, Esq., USMC (Ret.), Lancaster Barracks Co-Chairman*  
*Don Eberly, Lancaster Barracks Co-Chairman*  
*Bonnie Bowman, Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, VCCP Chairwoman*  
*Ray D’Agostino, USA (Ret.), CEO LHOP / VCCP Treasurer*

To read more about Veterans Court turning five - [http://lancasteronline.com/insider/lancaster-county-veterans-court-reaches--year-anniversary-deemed-a/article\\_8fd43210-ea4a-11e6-83c9-971c5a038bb4.html](http://lancasteronline.com/insider/lancaster-county-veterans-court-reaches--year-anniversary-deemed-a/article_8fd43210-ea4a-11e6-83c9-971c5a038bb4.html)

To read first hand a success story, check out Art Westerfer’s story in LNP at - [http://lancasteronline.com/insider/life-with-ptsd-army-combat-veteran-works-to-move-past/article\\_51aa65ee-a76b-11e6-a55d-9f1fa62ed728.html](http://lancasteronline.com/insider/life-with-ptsd-army-combat-veteran-works-to-move-past/article_51aa65ee-a76b-11e6-a55d-9f1fa62ed728.html).

