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New Web-Based Resource To Support Veterans' Caregivers in Virginia

VIRGINIA: Virginians providing informal care to veterans now have access to a new web-based technology that offers an integrated approach to finding support services and educational information – helping them to maintain their emotional and physical health.

VirginiaNavigator is pleased to announce a new collaborative initiative with the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). As a result of the collaboration, family members caring for veterans have a new resource enabling them to easily search for support information and resources to better assist them in their caregiving role.

“The Commonwealth is fortunate in having many family caregivers who tirelessly give of themselves day-in and day-out to care for the veterans in their lives. The healthcare system cannot support the needs of all Virginia veterans without the force extender provided by family caregivers. Anything we can do to support them is a priority of ours and this partnership is helping us to do just that,” said VWWP executive director, Brandi Jancaitis.

VirginiaNavigator's Veterans' Caregivers Resource Page, offers a virtual information-hub that enables veteran caregivers to access valuable resources in one place, at their convenience, including:

- Veteran caregiver-specific educational articles and resource guides
- Key tools and links to a variety of interactive tools and training modules
- An easy-to-use search tool to find local support services across Virginia
- A robust Caregiver Forum, offering a place where veteran caregivers can ask questions, give answers, exchange messages and get support from other family caregivers of veterans

The launch of this informational resource page comes at a most-appropriate time as we prepare for National Family Caregivers Month in November and Veteran's Day. Each of these observances are dedicated to honoring and paying tribute to heroes in our community – the men and women in our armed forces who have protected our country and freedom, as well as family caregivers who give of themselves to support and care for their loved ones.

Across Virginia thousands of individuals are caring, in their homes, for service members who are coping with traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental and physical injuries and illnesses.

“Being a family caregiver is a rewarding experience, but an extremely challenging one. It is a job most of us aren't trained to do and families are often overwhelmed by a lack of information and ongoing support,” said Adrienne Johnson, executive director, VirginiaNavigator. “We are pleased to offer this new resource to our service men and women and their families, in close collaboration with our partners, DVS and the VWWP. We all share a steadfast commitment to empowering veteran caregivers and providing them with resources to help them navigate their caregiving journey.”

To access the Veterans' Caregivers Resource Page visit www.VeteransCaregivers.org

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- **VirginiaNavigator**, a statewide non-profit, provides free health and community support information and guidance to seniors, people with disabilities, family caregivers, and health care professionals – supporting independence, dignity, and quality of life. Designed as an award-winning service model combining information technology with community-building, VirginiaNavigator offers a 'high-tech' and 'high-touch' approach to healthy lifestyle and long term care support. Vital services and information can be found through its family of websites (disAbilityNavigator.org, SeniorNavigator.org and VirginiaNavigator.org)
- **The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS)** operates 23 benefit services offices where representatives assist veterans and their family members in filing claims for federal veterans benefits. The agency operates three cemeteries for veterans: the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia, the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin. DVS operates two long-term care facilities offering nursing and domiciliary care for veterans; the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) a facility which houses 240 beds in Roanoke and the 160-bed Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond.

The agency also certifies that post-secondary educational institutions meet G.I. Bill funding and eligibility requirements, enabling veterans and family members to pursue educational opportunities. DVS also launched the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program in 2012. This program's mission is to educate and train employers throughout the Commonwealth on the Value of Virginia's Veterans, and to help employers connect with these personnel assets to maximize the productivity of their workforce.

DVS also administers the Virginia War Memorial. The Memorial honors our fallen heroes by passing their extraordinary stories of sacrifice forward to future generations through many outreach and on-site educational programs.

- **The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP)** is operated by DVS and provides: comprehensive assessment of individual and family needs; direct linkages to needed services including behavioral healthcare, veteran's benefits, housing, employment and other public and private assistance programs. Direct support is provided by veteran peer specialists, resource specialists, family support specialists and clinicians. VWWP also provides peer and family support groups; resilience-focused training and events for veteran couples and families; and specialized outreach and assistance to particularly vulnerable veterans including homeless (or at risk) and incarcerated veterans preparing for reentry from local jails and state prisons.