



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

CONTACT: SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS 316-660-9370 FAX: 316-383-7509

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 21, 2008

Contact:

Jenni Gluszek
Kristi Zukovich
316-660-9370

SEDGWICK COUNTY ANNOUNCES COLLABORATION WITH VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – Sedgwick County is a veteran-friendly community with 11.4% of its citizens (more than 40,000) being veterans. The Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners recognizes the strong need for collaboration with the Robert J. Dole Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Regional Office Center.

A news conference regarding this collaboration and additional changes in our community will take place at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, July 22 in the meeting room of the Board of County Commissioners, 3rd floor of the Sedgwick County Courthouse, 525 N Main. Speakers will include Sedgwick County Commission Chairman Tom Winters; Sedgwick County Commissioner David Unruh; Tom Sanders, Director, Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center and Arnold Russo, Acting Director, Robert J. Dole VA Regional Office.

The initial focus for assisting veterans will be employment services and jail diversion. Employment is critical to quality of life and satisfaction with the community. However, there are currently few employment and training opportunities available for veterans with criminal records, specifically felony records. Sedgwick County has started, and plans to continue, facilitating round table discussions to find more employment options and services for veterans.

- more -

The Sedgwick County Adult Detention Facility currently books an average of one to two veterans per day. Early identification of these individuals with appropriate care and treatment can reduce this number and avoid future veteran arrests.

One immediate change will be seen in Sedgwick County procedures. Sedgwick County staff will now ask if an individual is a veteran when they interact with Corrections or any other county human services agency. This will allow county staff to identify and refer veterans to the services available to them through the VA. The VA has committed to training county and other community agency staff about resources, services and benefits available to veterans. This will help create a smoother transition between systems. If citizens have questions about eligibility for veteran programs, they should call 660-7673.

“The purpose of this collaboration is for veterans to receive the services they want and need. This is a win for everyone in our community,” stated Sedgwick County Commission Chairman Tom Winters. “This is the least we can do for those who have given so much for their nation and fellow citizens.”

- end -