

News Release

For Immediate Release

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New West Valley Hub for Veteran Resources and Support Services Launches in Surprise

Public-Private Partnership, Donor Network Help Grow West Valley Military and Veteran Success Center

Phoenix, Ariz. (Apr. 21, 2021) – Veterans, service members (active duty, Guard and reserve) and their families now have a new place to access resources, support and assistance in the West Valley.

In partnership with the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF), Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, Northern Arizona University (NAU), Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation, and Rio Salado Community College, the City of Surprise is proud to offer the West Valley Military and Veteran Success Center a new home within the Surprise Resource Center at the AZ TechCelerator Campus, located at 12425 W. Bell Road, Suite 124. The center includes a variety of military and veteran support services and resources, made possible by the generous support of partner organizations and all West Valley cities.

Support services at the Surprise Resource Center will be rolled out in phases. The first phase of services are available now and include a part-time Be Connected navigator as well as a full-time AmeriCorps member provided by ACMF and NAU. Both services aim to provide greater opportunities to access the benefits and services crucial to the well-being of current and former military personnel and their families.

"This collaboration draws in such a wide variety of partners that are all unified under one goal – providing support and assistance to Arizona's service members, veterans and their families," says former U.S. Marine and Director of ACMF, Thomas Winkel. "We are so appreciative of the willingness of these partners to expand access to the vast ecosystem of support that exists across Arizona for military and veteran families – including the Be Connected program, our nationally recognized public/private partnership. This new center further expands our collective reach."

The city of Surprise, a longtime partner to the ACMF, offered this space as a way to demonstrate their continued commitment to the veteran community.

"Honoring and supporting the veteran community has always been a priority for Surprise," says City of Surprise Mayor Skip Hall. "We are thankful that we have community partners who feel the same way and have come together to help our Surprise Resource Center offer expanded resources and one-on-one guidance to connect our brave heroes to programs and services that will help them thrive well into the future."

The AmeriCorps staff member, who holds a dedicated office in Surprise Resource Center, is a part of the statewide NAU initiative that works to unite people and help them tackle challenges through connection to resources.

"This partnership offers an exciting opportunity to expand services in the West Valley and will serve as a model for other community partnerships across the state," says Andrew Facemire, AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, Center for Service and Volunteerism. "We're excited to be a part of this collaboration."

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Russ Dickerson, NAU's Assistant Director for the AmeriCorps Program, emphasizes the importance of the center's focus on service to those who have served. "We here at the Center for Service and Volunteerism are very excited about our part of the project with the West Valley Military and Veteran Success Center. It's an important project and a great expression of National Service."

In addition to the full-time AmeriCorps staff member, the center will house a Be Connected Navigator. The navigator will work to provide connections to veteran supportive resources that exist across Arizona and help to troubleshoot barriers to accessing those resources.

The second phase of this initiative will include the deployment of an Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Veteran Benefits Counselor (VBC) through a pilot program, which will establish a satellite office and create access for service members residing in the West Valley. VBCs are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and advocate for Arizona's service members, veterans and their families with receiving federal and state veteran benefits. The services provided by the VBC will be available three days a week beginning this fall at a date to be announced.

"We always aim to eliminate barriers to accessing benefits for Arizona's veteran community," says Retired Air Force Colonel Wanda Wright, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Director. "We don't want anyone to be more than 50 miles away from a VBC. This collaboration helps us put VBCs closer to the people who need them."

This new location in Surprise not only allows a space for military and veteran specific services, but also full wrap-around services at the same spot since the center is located within the Surprise Resource Center, which offers general social service support.

"Through the support of Luke Air Force Base, we have served active military members and their families since 1979," said Greg Pereira, Rio Salado Vice President of Student Affairs. "This is a wonderful partnership that has led to the need for expanding services off the base, as obtaining base access can be a barrier for some veterans. We now have an additional home and an army of community partners to help us continue the mission and legacy of working with West Valley veteran populations in a location that provides easier access. We are delighted to support West Valley Military and Veteran Success Center and provide educational support services for our military communities at this new location and at Luke Air Force Base."

Rio Salado thanks the following agencies and organizations who donated to ensure the successful launch of The West Valley Veteran Success Center at Luke Air Force Base and who continue in their support of the mission of the West Valley Military and Veteran Success Center.

Donor agencies:

ADM Group
Archimedes Hill Investments
AZ Pro Graphics
City of Avondale
City of Buckeye
City of El Mirage
City of Glendale
City of Goodyear
City of Litchfield Park
City of Peoria

City of Surprise
City of Tolleson
Credit Union West
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John F. Long Foundation
JP Morgan Chase & Co.
Liberty Utilities Corporation
Lockheed Martin Corporation

Maricopa County Industrial
Development Authority
Mellon Family Foundation
OCM Recycle West
Pop-A-Lock of Phoenix
The Kroger Co. Foundation
Tohono O'odham Nation
Town of Youngtown

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For more information on the West Valley Military and Veteran Success Center, call (623) 222-1658 or visit the City of Surprise website at surpriseaz.gov/veterans.

Service members, veterans and their families located anywhere in Arizona can also access statewide resources and services — at no cost — by calling the Be Connected Support Line at (866) 4AZ-VETS (866-429-8387) and visiting www.BeConnectedAZ.org.

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About the City of Surprise



Located about 45 minutes from downtown Phoenix, Surprise is home to nearly 140,000 residents who enjoy clean, safe neighborhoods, a family-friendly environment and incredible retail and recreational amenities. Surprise is rated one of the top ten safest cities in the nation and offers top-ranked public and charter schools. Recreation is big in this beautiful Sonoran-desert community. Surprise Stadium is the Spring Training home of two Major League Baseball teams, Surprise Tennis and Racquet

Complex attracts national tournaments, and the White Tank Mountain Regional Park bordering the city offers 30 thousand acres of outdoor recreation. Plus, the city offers eight gorgeous 18-hole golf courses, an urban fishing lake, and two public aquatic centers. Learn more at www.surpriseaz.gov.

About Rio Salado College

Rio Salado College is a proven leader in online learning. Established in 1978, the college has maintained a tradition of excellence in distance learning for over 40 years. Serving more than a quarter million students online for over 20



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years, we are dedicated to providing innovative educational opportunities through college bridge pathways, community-based learning, corporate and government partnerships, and early college initiatives. Rio Salado College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, offering more than 600 online classes and 135 degree and certificate programs.

About the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation

The Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation, with its donors and partners, supports the Maricopa County Community College District, its students, faculty, and staff through scholarships, programs, equipment, and financial and human capital. Visit www.mcccdf.org to learn more.



About Northern Arizona University



Northern Arizona University (NAU) is built on a student-first foundation—this was true when we opened our doors 120 years ago, and it's true now. NAU delivers world-class academic programs for a world-ready generation. In every classroom, top-flight research powers personalized teaching. The AmeriCorps @ NAU program offers the opportunity to make a difference in the community while developing professional skills. Every year, NAU AmeriCorps members partner with nonprofits and educational institutions to address the needs of those around them through programs focused on college readiness, opioid prevention, and STEM education.

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About the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) provides direct services to Veterans through Veteran Benefits Counselors who operate statewide helping Veterans connect with their VA benefits, four skilled-nursing State Veteran Homes in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff and Yuma that provide short and long-term care, and Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries in Sierra Vista, Camp Navajo and Marana. ADVS provides critical, state-wide coordination and technical assistance to services and organizations serving Veterans. This includes activities such as coordinating services across private and public sectors in serving targeted populations, such as Veterans experiencing homelessness, and special needs for the growing population of Women Veterans - many of whom are at-risk, as well as building community capacity to address Veteran employment and higher education.



About the Arizona Coalition for Military Families



The mission of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families is to connect the 500,000-plus servicemembers, veterans, and their families in Arizona to the right resources at the right time through the [Be Connected](#) program. The coalition is [recognized as a national leader](#) for its ability to bring together Arizona's public and private sector partners in a unified effort. Launched in 2009, the coalition works nationally and locally to advocate for veterans and military families, build the infrastructure needed to expand and sustain Arizona's statewide capacity to care for, serve, and support service members, veterans, and

their families. The coalition's membership extends across all levels of local, state and federal government as well as a vast network of private companies, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations and non-profit partners. To learn more about the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, visit www.ArizonaCoalition.org.

About the Be Connected® Program,

[Be Connected](#) links Arizona service members, veterans, families, and community helpers to information, support, and resources. Be Connected includes a support line, resource matching website, statewide team of community-based navigators, and training for everyone. Launched with the help, support, and guidance of the late Sen. John McCain, and now operated with support from the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Be Connected is available to any member of the military, veteran and family community by [calling](#) (866) 4AZ-VETS (429-8387) for help and support. Organizations that want to support and join our efforts should begin by [completing an application](#). For more information, to find support and learn more, visit www.BeConnectedAZ.org.

