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Hike brings together veterans programs in two cities

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KINGMAN - Veterans throughout Mohave County are finding out they'll always have a battle-buddy somewhere.

Nearly 60 members, supporters and employees of the Kingman and Lake Havasu City Veterans Treatment Court programs met up for a 2-mile hike down to Johnston Spring near Clack Canyon and a barbecue at Locomotive Park April 23.

This is the first event of its type for veterans in Kingman and it brought together current and former service members from all branches who served in both peacetime and war to walk and talk and bolster the veteran community.

"This lets the vets know we're looking out for them," said Kingman Municipal Court Judge Jeffrey Singer. "It also builds camaraderie."

Singer started the treatment court in



Veterans and supporters hiked and picked up trash along the wash through Johnston Canyon. (AARON RICCA/Miner)



December and currently has six cases. Kingman Municipal Court Judge Jeffrey Singer (left), Veterans Court Clerk Colene Lowery (middle) and her son Corbin Lowery hike through Johnston Canyon. (AARON RICCA/Miner)

The court helps deal with issues that commonly affect veterans - homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and reintegration back into civilian life.

Singer worked with Kingman Mayor Richard Anderson and the City Council after seeing the success of the Lake Havasu City program.

"There's been no recidivism (in Lake Havasu)," Singer said. "We're trying to do this here."

Singer, the son of an Air Force dad, had a personal connection that pushed him to start this program.

His brother was a Marine Corps veteran and had minor trouble with the law and substance abuse after being discharged.

He passed away from a drug overdose in 2004. There were no specialized courts at the time to help veterans deal with those kinds of issues.

"If he had a program like this, I think things might've turned out better," he said. "I know I can't do anything to help my brother, but a lot of what motivates me with this program is trying to help other veterans who for whatever reason are having difficulties in their lives."

Numerous entities donated time and effort to making the event a success. The Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council donated tables and chairs, Journey Church supplied its mobile kitchen/grill staffed by leaders and Boy Scouts from Troop 53, Wired Security and Sound provided music and the court provided food.

The picnic was a time for veterans to network and spread information about health care, education, housing assistance and support groups.

"These types of events show us about resources," said one of the hikers and court participants. "I didn't know some of these things existed."

"I wanted to volunteer," he said. "I've been in the court system before and now I want to be on this side of it."

"I had a chance to meet the Havasu crew," said another participant. "The hike was fantastic."

Singer plans to continue the event but, due to logistics, doesn't know when the next one will be.

"I'd like to do this maybe twice a year," he said. "This one was a huge undertaking."

"I thought overall the event was a huge success, especially being our first time doing this," he said. "The feedback we've gotten has been positive so I'm hoping everyone who took part enjoyed themselves and that they know how much we care about our veterans."

Singer also wanted to get the word out about a new mentor program. Mentors can act as a friend and ally and help veterans navigate the court, treatment and Veterans Affairs systems.

Requirements to be a mentor include that the person be a veteran and complete a mentor application form, have an interview with the mentor coordinator and complete the required training. The next scheduled mentor training will be from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. May 14 and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. May 17 at Southwest Behavioral Health Clinic, 2215 Hualapai Mountain Road, Suite H.

Anyone interested in becoming a mentor should contact mentor coordinator and pastor Dale Sharp, 928-757-4520, or Veterans Court Clerk Jamie McKinney, 928-753-8193. Additional information about the mentor program - including the application - can also be found through the Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council at www.javc.org.

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