

Workforce Central's Veterans Service Staff Honored Nationally

Workforce Central's Veterans Services Staff, William "Bill" Ryan and Michael Petrella, were honored at this year's National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Veterans Conference held recently in Washington DC. The two staff were nominated as a team for the prestigious Mark Sanders Award which recognizes exceptional service to veterans, especially those with significant barriers to employment, and the efforts they make above and beyond the scope of mandatory service provision as part of their one-stop career centers.

The two were joined in representing Massachusetts at the conference by Workforce Central Director, Janice Ryan Weekes, the Central MA Workforce Investment Board Executive Director, Jeff Turgeon, the MA Division of Career Services Director, Alice Sweeney, and several additional career center Veterans Services Representatives from across the Commonwealth.

The conference was attended by more than 500 participants who were able to hear from industry experts and leaders discussing a variety of matters relating to the theme of the conference, "serving those who served." Conference keynote speakers included Green Beret Commander, Mark Nutsch, who led a heroic 12-man team of U.S. Special Forces on a covert mission to Afghanistan immediately following the attacks on 9/11, riding to war on horses to fight the enemy-side by side with their local allies as they began the effort to successfully overthrow the Taliban. Conference attendees also heard Major MJ Hegar, a former Medevac helicopter pilot in Afghanistan with the Air National Guard, discuss being shot down in enemy territory. The ensuing rescue earned her both the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor (only the second woman in history to be so honored), and a Purple Heart. Unable to continue flying, Hegar sought and was denied a position in the Air Force. Once again, she fought back, leading efforts that resulted in the repeal of the Combat Exclusion Policy in 2013. Both keynote talks and the conference's breakout presentation sessions were all well received by the attendees.

Ms. Weekes says of the event and the recognition of the Workforce Central team:

The nomination was truly an honor. We take great pride in the service we provide to our veterans, as well as to the other populations we serve. In addition to the many things they do, Bill and Mike do an awesome job leading the Central MA Veterans' Coalition, which MA Secretary of Veterans' Services, Francisco Urena, speaks very highly of. We look forward to continuing to provide the best service possible to all of our customers.



The Massachusetts attendees at the 2018 NASWA Veterans' Services Conference

For more information regarding services for Veteran's at Workforce Central, please contact:

Bill Ryan
Veteran's Service Representative
340 Main Street, Suite 400
Worcester, MA 01608
Tel. 508-373-7620
[*RyanW@workforcecentralma.org*](mailto:RyanW@workforcecentralma.org)

Michael Petrella
Veteran's Service Representative
5 Optical Drive, Suite 200
Southbridge, MA 01550
Tel. 508-765-6430
[*Michael.petrella@Massmail.state.ma.us*](mailto:Michael.petrella@Massmail.state.ma.us)