

As 2016 winds down, I'd like to take the opportunity to wish all VETLANTA members a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year and to thank you for the contributions you've made to VETLANTA and to the veteran community as a whole throughout the year. It's been an incredible year for VETLANTA full of challenges and accomplishments. This year we once again saw tremendous growth in the club. If we had the foresight to accomplish a 10 year plan when we first started VETLANTA three years ago, the progress we made this year would have likely far exceeded those long range plans. I'd like to take this opportunity to review 2016, provide updates on recent progress and cover our plans for next year.

The core of VETLANTA collaboration is our quarterly summits. If you haven't attended a summit in a while, you are going to be very impressed with the professionalism, size & scope and the amazing opportunity available to network with veterans, members from small, medium and large businesses, non-profit organizations, academia and government. Our average summit attendance has increased from 50 attendees in 2014 to 125 in 2015 to over 275 this year.

Our first summit of the year was hosted by Turner at their corporate headquarters on January 27th. This was an extremely busy summit with presentations from Turner, Sun Trust, Georgia Tech, Coca-Cola, ESGR, Home Depot, Kimberly Clark Corporation, VYD & Associates, UPS, First Data, Southern Company/Georgia Power, Eaton, Lockheed Martin, ADP, Accenture, JWT, Deloitte, McKesson and the Georgia National Guard. My reflection on the summit was the incredible number of examples of how industry is partnering with non-profits and the government to make an impact in our community. It's clear that with our resources, passion, dedication and collaboration, we can make Atlanta the top destination for Veterans. Having a summit at Turner was a great honor as they are a staple of Atlanta and the Turner team planned and executed this summit with military precision. Thanks to Turner for their warm hospitality.



The Q2 Summit was on April 12th and was a first for VETLANTA as one of our member companies, KPMG rented a facility for the event. The Twelve Hotel Ballroom was an outstanding venue and our members came together to put on an amazing event. The VETLANTA Executive Leadership Team made a decision to change the format of the agenda for this summit and it positively changed the dynamics this and future summits. We decided to shorten the amount of time for formal PowerPoint presentations and set up 20 informational tables throughout the venue which ended up having a tremendous impact on networking. Collaboration was one of our early goals and is an essential element in serving the veteran community and the new format now provides an enhanced opportunity to connect.



The Q2 Summit had presentations from KPMG, That Others May Live Foundation, Pat Tillman Foundation, Recovery Consultants of Atlanta, Team RWB, TAPS, Military Warrior Support Foundation, Team River Runner, Hire Heroes USA, Soldiers Angels and The Technical College System of Georgia Foundation. The opportunity for non-profits to present and set up tables during networking provided our members visibility of efforts being conducted locally and nationally for veterans.

When I reflect back on this summit, I remember three very impactful presentations. The most impactful presentations provided very personal examples of struggles and community engagement. The first was Bonnie Carroll, Founder of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). Bonnie is a 2015 recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a veteran and the surviving spouse of the Brigadier General Tom Carroll. TAPS is the leading national Military Service Organization providing compassionate care, casework assistance, and 24/7/365 emotional support for all those impacted by the death of a military loved one. Ms. Carroll founded TAPS following the death of her husband in an Army C-12 plane crash on November 12, 1992. My wife and I had the opportunity to support the TAPS Regional Survivor Seminar in Atlanta several months later and it was an awe-inspiring emotional roller coaster. Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to hear Bonnie speak will instantly recognize the passion, pureness and emotion of her endeavor with TAPS.



The second in-person example came from Team River Runner. They invited one of their clients to speak; an Army veteran/wounded warrior father/husband who is utilizing this organization to help recover from some very traumatic injuries. The presentation was funny, sad and inspiring in one package. Team River Runner believes that every wounded and disabled veteran deserves the opportunity to embrace new challenges, invoke leadership, and promote camaraderie. Team River Runner provides an outlet to fulfill these beliefs – inviting wounded and disabled war veterans and their families to participate in adaptive paddling programs.

The third in-person example came from an unexpected source in Recovery Consultants of Atlanta (RCA). Sitting in the row directly behind me was a well-dressed, well-spoken couple that I had not previously seen at any VETLANTA event. Little did I know, the gentleman was a guest of RCA and a homeless veteran for over a year. He relocated from California to Atlanta and through the efforts of RCA, he was able to find permanent housing, start several small businesses and get married. His story was something you expect to see in a made for TV movie. I'd like to thank Ken Koch from KPMG for immediately recognizing the value of VETLANTA and signing up to host summits in 2016 and 2017.

The third summit of 2016 was held hosted by UPS on August 11th at their global corporate headquarters in Sandy Springs. As a UPSER, it was an honor welcoming VETLANTA to my house. We had a huge crowd of 340+ attend this summit including 25 UPS Veteran Business Resource Group (VBRG) leaders from across the country as UPS held our first ever in-person VBRG meeting in conjunction with the summit. The last VETLANTA Summit hosted at UPS was Q4, 2014 and although small in size with only 40 members attending, it was significant because our members established and approved the name VETLANTA.



This summit also proved to be significant as we hosted the Under Secretary of the Army, Patrick Murphy. Mr. Murphy's attendance was facilitated by the Soldier For Life program and our close friends, Lt Col Jerry Wood and MSG Shane Perret.



Mr. Murphy was very gracious with his time attending the full summit as well as afternoon breakout roundtable meetings with VETLANTA and UPS Leadership and veterans. In addition to Under Secretary Murphy, we welcomed Jared Ogden and Colonel (Ret) Dewey Wayne "Waddy" Waddell as guest speakers. Jared is a Navy Seal Veteran and Founder of Phoenix Patriot Foundation and starred for two seasons in National Geographic's Ultimate Survival Alaska.



Colonel Waddell is a retired Air Force F-105 pilot. In April 1967 he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and became a Prisoner of War while flying his 47th combat mission on July 5, 1967. After spending 2,070 days in captivity, he was released during Operation Homecoming on March 4, 1973.



My reflection of this summit is we have so many amazing veterans that serve our country in each generation. Under Secretary Murphy, Jared Ogden and Colonel Waddell are from three separate generations however they have much in common including commitment, sacrifice, honor, patriotism, resiliency and faith. It would be an incredible day to spend even five minutes with just one of these patriots and to spend the entire evening with all three was a privilege, an honor and one of my highlights from my time as Chairman of VETLANTA. I'd like to thank Chris Peck for supporting the summit and VETLANTA and Kevin Horgan and Ray Thompson for putting in countless volunteer hours in making it happen. Special thanks to the SFL team and the Babs Chase for the Office of the Army Chief of Staff for helping facilitate Mr. Murphy's visit.

The final summit of the year was held at Georgia Power Corporate Headquarters in Atlanta on October 13th. We were honored to have Terry Gerton, Mike Roby, Gary Corless and Len Pagano as guest speakers. Ms. Gerton is the Deputy Assistant Secretary Policy for Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) at U.S. Department of Labor. In addition to being our key note speaker, she joined VETLANTA leadership for a 90 minute round table discussion prior to the summit. She provided insight on the current labor market in Georgia and nationally and best practices to consider going forward.

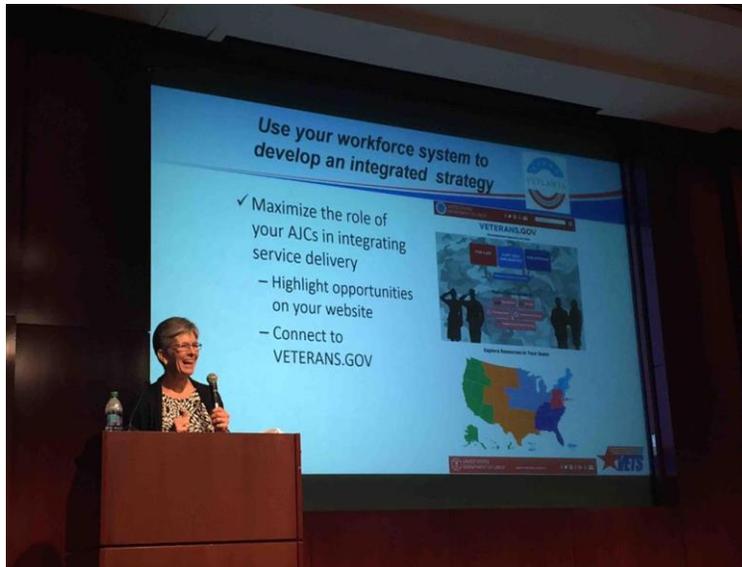


Commissioner Mike Roby from the Georgia Department of Veterans Services was our second speaker. The Georgia Department of Veterans Service is an agency of state government created for the purpose of advising, counseling, and assisting Georgia's veterans and their families in receiving their rightful benefits under the vast and complex framework of veterans' laws. VETLANTA looks forward to forging a closer relationship with Commissioner Roby and his department going forward.

Our third key note speaker was definitely a surprise to those of you who know me. Since starting VETLANTA three years ago, I've been one of the sharpest critics of Wounded Warrior Project. When they appeared on our agenda I received a fair amount of questions from members wanting to know what changed. Through our partnership with Americas Warrior Partnership, John Phillips and I had the opportunity to have separate and very frank discussions with the new CEO of WWP, Retired Lt General Michael Linnington. John and I both saw and heard some of the right things in our discussion including humility, a new willingness to engage and transparency. So after several discussions with the VETLANTA Executive Leadership Team and some of our core members, we decided to extend the invite and welcome Gary Corless, Chief Development Officer for WWP to come out and address our members. Gary focused on advising our members on what WWP is doing to transform and he also reviewed the impact WWP is making in the Atlanta community. Time will eventually tell in how successful WWP is with their transformation efforts and what the relationship with VETLANTA will be going forward however I'm pleased they now have a new willingness to listen to some of its critics and has made some changes.

Len Pagano, CEO of Safe America Foundation was our final guest speaker and he covered his idea for a future partnership with VETLANTA specifically VETV and also provided details on a special event Safe America was hosting in conjunction with the WorldSafe Awards gala in Atlanta. The event took place on Nov 19th and consisted of a Veterans Resource Fair and Reception from 5-7 pm at the Delta Flight Museum. Veterans were admitted free of charge to see the museum, attend the resource fair, view a special screening of the series 'Charlie Foxtrot,' and enjoyed a hosted reception. The Safe America Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit licensed by the state of Georgia. Chartered in 1994, with headquarters in Marietta, Georgia, the foundation partners with corporate, governmental, public and private sector organizations, and other nonprofits to improve the safety awareness and preparedness of Americans nationwide.

My reflection on this event is we need to make a concerted effort to continue to establish strategic relationships with business, non-profits, government agencies and academia. Our membership has grown substantially in 2016 and we need to ensure we establish grow the relationships that can help us make Atlanta the top destination for veterans. Special Thanks to Georgia Power and Southern Company team including long time VETLANTA members Jamal Jessie and Pat Papa.



VETLANTA was involved with so many great events and causes this year. It's challenging to comprehend everything we were connected with however I'm going to name a few. We supported several projects with Soldiers Angels; attended the TAPS Regional Survivor Seminar; hosted the VETCONNECT Panel at America's Warrior Partnership Warrior Integration Seminar; attended the USMC birthday celebration at JWT; hosted a transitioning veteran/spouse panel at an Association For Latino Professionals of America event; partnered with AT&T on an American Corporate Partners event for transitioning veterans; partnered with UPS, American Corporate and Hire Heroes USA on Transitioning Veteran/Spouse seminar; cooked Thanksgiving Day breakfast for 50 homeless veterans at Veterans Empowerment Organization, participated in the grand opening of Georgia Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center (VECTR); attended VETCONNECT dinner at Emory University; attended the Freedom Ball; participated in Wreaths Across America Event at the Georgia National Cemetery and hosted in partnership with UPS a Veteran Owned Business Summit.



On July 26th in partnership with the US Chamber Hiring Our Heroes Foundation and JWT-Atlanta, we hosted a special lunch with Dakota Meyer at JWT's corporate office in Buckhead. Dakota Meyer is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and the War in Afghanistan. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Ganjgal on September 8, 2009, in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Meyer is the second youngest living Medal of Honor recipient, the third living recipient for either Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan and the first living Marine in 38 years to be so honored. Dakota's comments were focused on what our community can do to assist transitioning service members and their spouses. We'd like to thank Chuck Hodges from the US Chamber Hiring Our Heroes Foundation for facilitating Dakota's visit. The Hiring Our Heroes Foundation is a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities.

J. Walter Thompson (JWT) is an international advertising agency headquartered in New York. It has more than 200 offices in over 90 countries. For more than 65 years, JWT has partnered with the United States Marine Corps to accomplish one mission: identify the best and brightest of our nation's youth and challenge them to discover if they have what it takes to earn the title "Marine." The relationship between the United States Marine Corps and JWT dates back to 1864 when J. Walter Thompson enlisted in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps in turn enlisted the help of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency nearly a century later in 1946 with their first war-time assignment; provide help designing uniforms for female Marines. JWT helped develop the Marine Corps "brand" as the most tough and elite branch of the United States military, attracting only those who want to and can succeed at whatever the institution requires. Special thanks to Marshall Lauck, COO at JWT-Atlanta for stepping up to the plate and hosting this great event. Marshall and JWT-Atlanta is a longtime supporter of VETLANTA and assisted with helping establish the club including designing our logo.



On Aug 1st, Matt John and I had the pleasure and honor to attend a breakfast meeting with VA Secretary Bob McDonald and the regional leadership from the VA. We spent 90 minutes discussing how VETLANTA was formed, how we operate, lessons learned, best practices and ways we can collaborate going forward. Secretary McDonald is a true patriot, an inspiring leader and has made great strides in changing the culture at the VA.



On Sep 7th, VETLANTA had the opportunity to participate in America's Warrior Partnership (AWP) Third Annual Warrior Symposium. AWP and VETLANTA met earlier in the year during one of our infamous pancake breakfasts to determine how we could partner in future endeavors. AWP extended the invite for VETLANTA to hold a VETCONNECT panel discussion. VETLANTA leadership and members conducted the panel discussion to 300 veterans, spouses and community/business subject matter experts. I immensely enjoyed moderating the panel and would like to thank our panelists, John Phillips, Dino Perone, Eddie Williams, Vivian Greentree, Trish Ross and Margaret Miller.



On Nov 19th the Safe America Foundation presented VETLANTA a 2016-17 WorldSafe Award which was presented at the Delta Flight Museum in Atlanta by Safe America CEO Len Pagano. During the ceremony Len stated "When you consider the many organizations out there helping veterans, VETLANTA has carved out a unique niche - bringing together a cross-section of Fortune 500 firms and building new ties with emerging non-profits and veteran service organizations that otherwise would never get introduced". It was a real honor accepting this award on behalf of our members. While we don't do this work for the recognition nor did we ever in our wildest dreams imagine that VETLANTA would develop into an organization that is recognized, it is a great honor and we accept this award as positive reinforcement that we are making a difference in Atlanta.



In 2016, we had to opportunity to establish a relationship with Atlanta Business Radio this year and many of our members appeared on episodes of Veterans Connect Radio, a spotlight episode of Atlanta Business Radio and powered by Business RadioX. The show is Co-Hosted by Ryan "Redhawk" McPherson and Brandon Skolnick and our very own John Phillips co-hosted several shows this year. Veterans Connect Radio features veteran entrepreneurs, support organizations, outreach groups and more in the Atlanta area continuing to serve our families, our communities and our country.



This year saw significant change with the Executive Leadership Team (Board). At the beginning of the year we added a Director of Communications position to the board and selected Krista deKryger for the position. Krista is an educator in the Gwinnett Public County School System a Marine Veteran Spouse and experienced in both the transitioning veteran and non-profit space. She has been instrumental in increasing the social media presence for the club. In July, Shreve Gould stepped down from his position as Director of Operations to focus on other endeavors and we selected Seth Deitchman as his replacement. Seth is a Financial Advisor for Morgan Stanley and has previously managed Atlanta Pat's Run for the Pat Tillman Foundation. In August we decided we needed to expand the board due to the rapidly increasing amount of hours it takes for club administration. We also wanted to add a full time resource focused on developing our new 7 Pillars Strategy so we moved Matt Grob from his position as Director of Administration to the new Director of Strategy position and named Patrick Haddock as the Director of Administration. Patrick is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserves, a Project Manager at Coca-Cola and has served at the President of the Coca-Cola Veterans Business Resource Group since 2014. In December we decided to add a seventh position to the board and named Garrett Cathcart as the Director of Community Relations. Garrett is an Army Veteran and Southeast Regional Director for Team Red, White, and Blue. The current board would like to thank past board members Shreve Gould and Steve Knezo for their continued involvement and support in the club.



Over the last three years we have steadily built the club and VETLANTA brand into something very special. We steadily increased our membership which proved to be extremely valuable in terms of networking, collaboration and employment. It's now time to press the accelerator down and made some lead way on our goal to make Atlanta the top destination for veterans. The board has been working on strategy development for the last year and we it's now time to implement. After much deliberation we decided to name the strategy initiative the 7 Pillars of VETLANTA. The pillars are Employment, Healthcare, Housing, Education, Social, Community Service and Business. Each of these pillars will have a Lead and a team of VETLANTA members to support plus an executive sponsor from the board. We have recently conducted 19 interviews and have named the following pillar leads.

Employment – Holly Best, Hire Heroes USA

Education – Roger Roley, FourBlock

Social – Patrick Griffith, Team RWB

Community Service – Kevin Horgan, UPS

Business – Michael Hare, SharpUSA

We still have vacancies in our **Healthcare** and **Housing** Pillars, so we will be looking to fill those as soon as possible. It is more important to get the right leader for these, not a leader right now; so please let us know if you are also interested in either of these or if you know someone that is interested in leading those Pillars and would be a great fit for this great team.



There are so many people to thank this year and there is no way I could include everyone who assisted VETLANTA this year so I will keep the list fairly short. First thanks goes out to my fellow board members, John, Matt, Krista, Seth, Patrick and Garrett. The sheer amount of countless hours each of them put into our club is probably not realized by many of our members but I can tell you it's a labor of love for each of us. I like to recognize our outside counsel Scott Bass of Hobgood & Bass. Scott has been a trusted adviser since the very early days of VETLANTA and can always be counted on to provide sound advice and direction when needed. Thank you to Kevin Horgan for being a great role model and for picking up the phone and jumping in the fight wherever and whenever we needed. Thanks for our 2016 Summit hosts Turner, KPMG, UPS and Georgia Power/Southern Company. As many of you know, we don't accept any money or conduct any fund raising activities. Our summits are supported by in-kind assistance and we had four great companies step up this year. Look forward to seeing all of our members at the first summit next year in February. Details will be provided in the near future.

On behalf of the entire Executive Leadership Team, I'd like to wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a safe and successful 2017.

VETLANTA – Making Atlanta the Top Destination for Veterans.



