



VET TO VET MAINE  
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**To Town Manager Peter Joseph and Members of the Freeport Town Council:**

**Summary: Friendships That Last a Lifetime**

Vet to Vet Maine is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving veterans in the state of Maine. Our mission is to ease the social isolation and loneliness that many veterans face as they age or when they return home from battle and to link them to services and benefits that can improve their standard of living.

Formed in June 2018, Vet to Vet Maine matches veteran peer companions with other veterans who need a friend and/or mentor. The two veterans visit on a regular basis (at least twice a month), sharing stories, enjoying activities together, and developing a friendship that can last a lifetime. The trained volunteers also guide their veteran friends in applying for needed services and benefits.

As far as we know, Vet to Vet Maine is the only ongoing peer-to-peer friendly visitor program in the state devoted exclusively to veterans. The program has been in operation for 7-1/2 years, first as a program at Southern Maine Agency on Aging, since 2018 as an independent tax-exempt nonprofit.

**Veterans and the Town of Freeport:** The Town of Freeport has been welcoming to veterans. According to U.S. Census estimates for 2017, 529 veterans reside in Freeport. Of those veterans, nearly 47 percent are 65 years old or older.

When compared to civilians, veterans are more likely to take their own lives, more likely to become homeless, and more likely to have disabilities. Fewer than half use any VA benefits or services to which they are entitled; of those who do, many use only one VA benefit. Living during the pandemic has been especially hard on veterans who are already isolated.

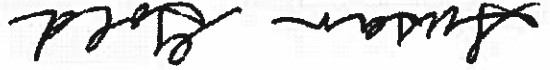
**Freeport Veterans and Vet to Vet Maine:** Beginning in October 2018, three Freeport residents have received services from Vet to Vet Maine, including regular visits from volunteer peer companions, who spent almost 400 hours dedicated to the well-being of their veteran friends. Two Freeport residents are currently volunteering as peer companions. We would like to increase these numbers to bring more Freeport veterans a peer companion who can provide friendship and assistance in obtaining benefits and services that can enrich their lives.

These veterans can tell you of the many ways the Vet to Vet program has made a difference in their lives and changed them for the better. Not only does the program address social isolation among veterans, it also links veterans to vital services that allow them to live healthier lives and stay in their homes longer. It provides respite and support for family members caring for veterans. And it offers volunteers a way to assist fellow veterans and give meaning to their own lives while doing it. In several cases, volunteers are helping the veterans they visit preserve their stories—invaluable historical lessons that can benefit students and the entire community.

Because of the work done by Vet to Vet volunteers, veterans have:

- Received a VA pension;
- Moved to better living quarters;

Susan Gold, Executive Director, Vet to Vet Maine



Very best regards,

We hope you will consider our request to serve as a cosponsor of VZVME's grant application. With your help, we can support more Freepport veterans and help ease the social isolation that too many of them face.

The municipalities participating in the Cumberland County multi-community block grant as cosponsors for Vet to Vet Maine indicate their backing for VZVME as recipient of the grant. One town has tentatively agreed to serve as lead sponsor. We are asking other communities to sign on as cosponsors to bolster Vet to Vet Maine's chances of receiving a \$25,000 grant VZVME will provide officials (town or Town manager or administrator) in the sponsoring communities, backed by a Council vote, would sign on to the project saying they are cosponsors of VZVME's grant application. There are no other liabilities or responsibilities for cosponsoring municipalities. Deadline for preapplication is Dec. 15; cosponsors' deadline for signing on as cosponsors is before the full application deadline on Jan. 20, 2022.

### Municipality's role as cosponsor

The money will help cover the costs of the Vet to Vet Maine program in Cumberland County, including background checks for volunteers, training expenses, and the salaries of a half-time program director and part-time volunteer coordinator who will recruit, train, and assign veteran volunteers to veterans who need a friend. The two staff members will support the veteran teams, troubleshoot, refer veterans to other services, and find resources to address needs.

### How the grant money will be spent

Vet to Vet Maine is working with Cumberland County municipalities to benefit from a \$25,000 grant under the Cumberland County Community Development block grant program. One lead sponsor will submit the grant with VZVME as the beneficiary. We are asking other municipalities to sign on as cosponsors. FMI on the grant program, please visit <https://www.cumberlandcounty.org/168/Applicant-Information>.

### Your Participation in a Multi-Community Grant with VZVME Can Make a World of Difference

- Reconnected with the community;
- Benefited from a variety of VA and other services;
- Published a book of memoirs;
- Received new hearing aids;
- Planted and harvested a garden once again;
- Made lifelong friends;
- Smiled and shared laughs;
- Found a reason to live.