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FOCUSING ON SUCCESS

VUB Offers a Variety of Ways to Prepare for Your College Career

Summer Academy is in full swing right now. If you missed the first few weeks and are feeling unprepared for what lays ahead in the fall, we got you. One of Veterans Upward Bound's best features is all our services are individualized to meet each person's needs, no matter when they come to us. Everyone comes back to school at a different level. Our aim in VUB is to help you feel confident in your

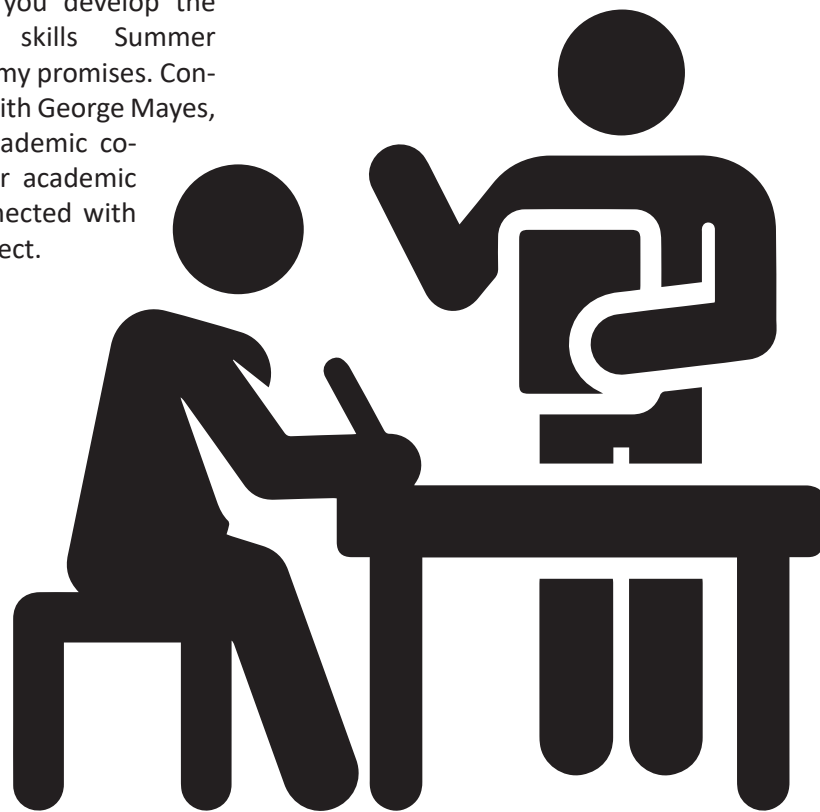


Michelle Ciesielski
Director

skills and abilities in the classroom. So if you are heading back into the classroom and missed a few sessions of Summer Academy, we have a program that will still help you develop the same skills Summer Academy promises. Connect with George Mayes, our academic co-

ordinator to get started in your academic prep. He will help you get connected with the right tutor and the right subject.

Being academically prepared before school starts is highly underrated. You may feel too busy to balance one more thing on your almost-too-full plate. But I challenge you: If you are planning to go to school in the Fall, and in a few months you will be balancing school in your life, why not give it a trial run? Sign up for a Math or English refresher course, get in a routine of studying and completing your coursework, all while building your academic skills.



A refresher course with one of our staff or tutors is low-stakes. There are no academic credits. You aren't strictly graded and your GPA won't be affected. Our refresher courses are the perfect summer activity to sharpen your mind for the future.

As a reminder, we are open Monday through Thursday 8am-5pm and Fridays 8am-4:30pm in June and July. Look for a return to our normal hours in August. If you need anything outside of office hours, we can arrange that if you make an appointment in advance. We looking forward to having you all back in our lab soon!

TAKING A LOOK BACK

Reminisce With VUB As WE Look Back At The Last Five Years



PROGRAM PROVIDING POSITIVE CHANGE

Veterans Treatment Court Making a Difference in Lives

As an organization dedicated to helping veterans, we of course love to see them succeed. However, some veterans struggle and find themselves on a less than desirable path. Either through poor choices or circumstances some, veterans may pick up criminal charges and begin to feel lost.

Navigating the criminal justice system can be daunting under the best of circumstances, but facing criminal charges can be crippling for a veteran with addictions, PTSD, or coping with homelessness.



Joshua Boley
Outreach Coordinator

Thankfully, southwest Missouri is home to four Veterans Treatment Courts which includes one in Greene County. The Greene County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) started September 2017 and has been helping veterans ever since.

Marcy Van De Berg, MSW, LCSW is with Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks and is Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator. According to Marcy, Greene County, Christian County and Jasper County each have their own VTC. The Southwest Missouri Veterans Treatment Court is comprised of Barry, Dade, Lawrence and Stone counties and Newton County is in the process of developing their own as well.

Some veterans may have charges in other counties but reside in Greene County and therefore could be referred to Greene County's VTC. Marcy also said surrounding counties that do not have a VTC may refer veterans to Greene County VTC as well.

Veterans enter into the VTC a few different ways. Typically, veterans come to VTC after sentencing. During a sentencing assessment it may be determined the veteran would be better served participating in VTC rather than standard probation. This determination is made by weighing what the veteran's strengths and liabilities are. For instance, if the veteran lacks proper housing, or struggling with addictions or PTSD, the veteran may need additional support to succeed.

One example of additional support could be referring the veteran to community resources. Community resources may provide additional support with housing, food security or mental health services. Another form of support comes in the way of volunteer mentors. These mentors walk alongside the veteran to provide encouragement and additional accountability when the veteran is not in court or meeting with a probation and parole officer.

The state of Missouri utilizes an assessment known as Risk and Needs Triage (RANT) which is a national standard for best practices in treatment courts.

"If it [RANT] determines their risk of re-offending and their needs are high enough then they qualify for a treatment court," Marcy said. "Part of that reasoning is if they are not at risk of re-offending, they have all their needs met, then they could probably be successful on straight probation."

However, some veterans are not honest during their assessment, said Probation and Parole Officer Shannon Tilley. "After they have been on supervision for a while and they can't hold that façade up then they may end up being put in treatment court," Shannon said. Additionally, some veterans



Shannon Tilley



Marcy Van De Berg



Rachel Morgan

do not make their military service know during the assessment out of shame or embarrassment and they don't want to discredit their particular branch of the military.

After completing VTC a veteran could receive a suspended execution of sentence and avoid prison and permanent felony on their record.

Rachel Morgan is an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney with the Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office explained a veteran could complete the program in 18 months if they did everything perfect.

"Usually there are hiccups along the way, whether they fall back into using and relapse or they get in a bad romantic relationship and

that causes them to go off the rails for a while," Rachel said. "I would say it's more standard for someone to take about three years."

Some veterans are placed in VTC as part of plea deal, but Rachel said being a veteran doesn't guarantee you're eligible.

"I'm not going to advocate as a prosecutor, and I would not expect most judges, to be on board with putting someone who has murdered on probation." Rachel said.

Greene County VTC also does not take current or prior sex offenders.

Rachel said, while VTC can be a great tool for helping veterans, it's not a get out of jail free card. Veterans in VTC will spend more time in front of the judge and probation officer than those on standard probation. Additionally, those struggling with addiction may be drug tested twice a week in comparison to once every six months with standard probation.

All this extra time and investment help ensure the veteran succeeds.

"Ultimately, the goal of veterans treatment court is to help them change their lives," Marcy said. Like many organizations, COVID had a negative effect on VTC as many of their volunteer mentors were not available. According to Marcy many of their prior mentors were Vietnam era retired military. However, she is seeing former VTC graduates who are doing well come back as mentors to give back.

"Those relationships last long term because this volunteer is meeting with them outside of court and developing a relationship." Marcy said. If you are a veteran looking to become a volunteer mentor contact either Marcy Van De Berg, or Shannon K. Tilley.

Marcy Van De Berg, MSW, LCSW
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Shannon K. Tilley
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Missouri Department of Corrections

NAVY VET CHARTS TUTORING COURSE

VUB'S Math Tutor Helps Others Succeed

How does one become a tutor?

Well, you should probably be good at what you're tutoring. You should be able to communicate the concepts of the subject in a way that's easy to understand. You should have a genuine interest in helping others.

All these things are true of Veterans Upward Bound math tutor, Ben Fiene. But Ben's path to becoming our tutor began with a conversation with his Navy recruiter. "I remember my recruiter at the time said you need to get high school diploma," Ben said. According to Ben, he wasn't a good student in high school and was debating dropping out. However, he joined the delayed entry program for the Navy his senior year, managed to graduate, and shortly after found himself aboard the USS Nimitz as a boatswain's mate.



Joshua Boley
Outreach Coordinator

Ben attempted college shortly after he left the Navy but said he didn't really have a sense of direction and wasn't sure what he wanted to do at the time.

In 2001 Ben's father became sick. Ben's dad had started a delivery service with Ben's uncle and had been operating it since the late 80s. Unfortunately, his father's health would not allow him to continue it. Ben's father and uncle asked if he would join the business and help out. He accepted the position, and said he did well for a few years financially.

Ben's father passed away in late 2006. Shortly after Ben's uncle approached him and told Ben that the

world was changing and the need for the delivery service was going away as more things could be done on-line.

Ben said his uncle is the patriarch of the family and one day asked Ben what he wanted to do with his life. Ben told him he wanted to go to college and study math. Ben's uncle encouraged him to become a math teacher and offered to pay for his education. Ben's uncle wanted to ensure when he graduated college that he would not have any additional debt.

"I was very, very fortunate," Ben said. "It took about seven years for me to get a bachelor's degree."

Ben considers himself to not be a great student saying he often has to fail several times, but always comes back to it. Despite wanting to become a math teacher, when he took his college entrance exam he placed in second lowest math to start.

"I took college algebra and failed it the first time," Ben said. "I took it a second time and passed."

Ben said he also failed Calculus II the first time but passed the class with an A the second time. Ben graduated college with a Bachelor of Science in Education with an emphasis in high school mathematics. He is certified through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Missouri.

“When you want to learn something, the act of learning suddenly becomes very easy”



Ben Fiene

After graduating from college in 2014, he moved to Springfield where he became a substitute teacher and started tutoring. However, in 2019 the company he contracted through let him go, and by 2020 Ben was almost bankrupt.

Ben took advice from his roommate and accepted a temporary position with the US Census and upon its completion found himself once considered tutoring.

"One day I was sitting at my computer and typed in OTC jobs, and sure enough there was a math tutor for Veterans Upward Bound," Ben Said.

He usually helps between 3 - 4 students a week consistently, but some weeks he sees more. Ben couldn't think of a negative thing to say about his position with Veterans Upward Bound but said the highlight is when students let him know they did better on a test or assignment than they expected.

"Whenever somebody says they did a good job or they are happy with what they've done, that's what I find most satisfying," Ben said.

Ben said students often come to tutoring sessions full of anxiety and already intimidated by math. His advice is to take a moment and look at the sensibility of math and commit to learning.

"When you want to learn something, the act of learning suddenly becomes very easy," Ben said.

Ben is available to tutoring for participants of Veterans Upward Bound and tutoring can be scheduled at the Veterans Upward Bound Academic Lab locat-

ed in Information Commons West, room 217 on the Springfield campus of Ozarks Technical Community College. Virtual options can be scheduled by emailing vub@otc.edu.

Ozarks Technical Community College

**Veterans
&
Military
Services**

e-mail

has a new email address
veterans@otc.edu

SUMMER ACADEMY IS BACK

VUB Summer Academy is a six-week non-residential summer program that is offered for all VUB participants. The goal of the Summer Academy is to simulate a college-going experience, increase access to college services, and provide an engaging and fun learning environment. All VUB participants will have full access to project services as well as additional extracurricular activities and opportunities not offered during the academic year.



George Mayes

Adult Education Coordinator

VUB participants will have access to the VUB lab, tutoring services, academic advising, VUB workshops, as well as the opportunity to attend an off-campus VUB event. Off-campus events include field trips, college visits, and cultural experiences. The Summer Academy offers workshops in study skills, Microsoft

Office, Growth Mindset, creative writing and basic math concepts. Math and English refresher courses are available to help students refresh their skills and there are also some fun activities available such as a book club, watercolor painting, and even a juggling class! The Summer Academy runs from June 6th through July 15th.



THE BRIEFING

The Briefing is a quarterly newsletter published by Veterans Upward Bound in Springfield, Mo.

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a federally funded grant program helping veterans on their path to higher education. We do this by offering; academic and career planning, financial aid, benefit advising, tutoring, admissions assistance, and community resources. All services from VUB are free to veterans who qualify. While our offices are located at

OTC, we are able to help veterans with a Greene County address, regardless of where they want to attend college.

online:
email:

otc.edu/vub
vub@otc.edu



@vubotc

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