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DVS Announces Partnership With Citizens Committee for New York City for Next Cycle of Dwyer Peer Support Program

Collaboration will build on successful first cycle of community-based programs designed to strengthen connection among New York City veterans and their families

NEW YORK — The New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) announced a new partnership with Citizens Committee for New York City (CitizensNYC) to support the upcoming cycle of the Private First-Class Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program, continuing the city's investment in Veteran Service Organizations and community-based opportunities that help veterans and their families combat social isolation, strengthen well-being, and access supportive services.

Through this collaboration, CitizensNYC will serve as a fiduciary partner and assist with the drafting and administration of task orders to help facilitate the next round of Dwyer Peer Support programs, helping DVS continue programming that strengthens social connection and complements the agency's broader mental health and suicide prevention efforts.

"Upon returning from service, veterans often contend with immense social isolation, which can have a profound impact on their well-being," said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Helen Arteaga**. "Combating social isolation begins with creating opportunities for meaningful connection, community, and a renewed sense of belonging. Through peer support and community-based programming, this Administration is proud to be strengthening the networks that surround our veterans and ensuring they know that New York City continues to stand with them long after their service ends."

"Dwyer is rooted in a simple but powerful idea: connection matters," said **New York City Department of Veterans' Services Commissioner Yesenia Mata**. "Our Dwyer Peer Support Program has showed us the value of creating welcoming spaces where veterans and their families can build relationships, try something new, and reconnect with a sense of community. CitizensNYC brings decades of experience helping local organizations turn good ideas into meaningful neighborhood impact, and that makes them a natural partner as we look toward the next chapter of this work."

"CitizensNYC has spent decades trusting that the people closest to a community are the ones best equipped to serve it," said **CitizensNYC CEO Julie Shapiro**. "That's exactly the model DVS built with Dwyer, and we're honored to bring our contracting infrastructure to



bear so more veteran-serving and cultural organizations can do what they do best. Our job is to make it easier for these groups to say yes to the work, whether that's a peer support circle, an art class, or a hike, so veterans and their families have more doors open to them across every borough."

With funding from New York State, DVS launched its first city-administered PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program in 2025, adapting the statewide peer-support model to emphasize accessible, in-person experiences that allow connection to develop organically in a non-clinical setting. Through the initiative, DVS awarded grants to 31 veteran- and community-based organizations to provide free, in-person programming for military service members and veterans, as well as their families, caregivers, and survivors.

DVS's approach places particular emphasis on shared activities as entry point to peer connection. Participating organizations offered programming across the creative arts, wellness, recreation, and other areas, giving members of the military and veteran community opportunities to develop new interests, spend time with peers, and strengthen their sense of community.

Early results from that first cycle demonstrated strong participant engagement. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed participants strongly agreed that their program increased their sense of connection to other veterans, three-quarters said it supported their emotional well-being, and 90 percent reported they would be very likely to recommend their Dwyer program to another veteran.

The results reinforce DVS's approach to peer support: creating opportunities for relationships to develop organically through shared experiences while providing participants with pathways to additional veteran benefits, services, and supports when they are needed.

The upcoming cycle will build on that foundation while drawing on CitizensNYC's experience supporting VSOs, community-based organizations and neighborhood-led initiatives across the five boroughs. Twenty-three organizations are pre-qualified to respond to the task orders when issued by CitizensNYC.

Additional information about opportunities for active-duty, veterans, survivors, caregivers and their families to participate in Dwyer programs will be announced as details are finalized.

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About the New York City Department of Veterans' Services

The New York City Department of Veterans' Services' mission is to connect, mobilize, and empower New York City's veteran community to foster purpose-driven lives for U.S. military service members — past and present — and their caregivers, survivors, and families. DVS assists members of the veteran community with employment, housing, food security, well-being, benefits, culture, and targeted advocacy.

About CitizensNYC

Founded in 1975, CitizensNYC supports New Yorkers working to make their neighborhoods more connected, resilient, and healthy. One of the nation's first micro-funding organizations, CitizensNYC provides more than \$1 million in microgrants each year to hundreds of volunteer-led initiatives, small nonprofits, small businesses, and public schools across the five boroughs. Beyond grantmaking, CitizensNYC serves as a convener and capacity-builder, connecting community leaders with knowledge, expertise, and resources that help strengthen the social and economic fabric of New York City.