May is Military Awareness Month and we focus this edition of the UMD-PRC newsletter on highlighting the work of our affiliate faculty member Dr. Sally Koblinsky, and one of her community partners, Ms. Ginger Miller of the Women Veteran’s Interactive. We honor their work regarding the health of veterans as we honor those veterans for whom their work is dedicated. A recent funding opportunity announcement (FOA) from the Naval Health Research Center (Solicitation #W911QY-15-R-0025) brings into focus ways in which public health researchers may serve our military. This FOA focuses on such concerns as: “Career-Span Health and Wellness Studies”, “Post-Vaccination Epidemiological Studies”, and “HIV/AIDS Prevention”. With research leaders such as Dr. Koblinsky, perhaps we can better pursue opportunities to support those who so profoundly serve each and every one of us.

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Faculty Highlight

In honor of military awareness month, the Prevention Research Center is proud to highlight the work of Dr. Sally Koblinsky, Family Science professor and affiliate faculty with the UMD-PRC. Dr. Koblinsky and her departmental colleagues, Dr. Leigh Leslie (Co-Investigator), Dr. Katie Hrapczynski and Dr. Emily Cook, have conducted research and programming to enhance Maryland health professionals’ capacity to treat veterans for war-related conditions. Dr. Koblinsky was PI of a 2-year grant from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), titled the Maryland Veterans Resilience Initiative (MaVRI), which focused on veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. The project completed a statewide needs assessment examining more than 3,000 civilian behavioral health and primary care providers’ knowledge and comfort in addressing veterans’ health conditions. Using these data, the research team trained 1,000 Maryland health professionals in use of best practices for treating PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), sleep disorders, suicide ideation, and military sexual trauma, among other conditions. The project also increased peer support programs for student veterans at 6 community colleges and four-year institutions across the state, including Prince George’s Community College and Bowie State University. Koblinsky is also PI of a second state grant, Enhancing Women Veterans’ Behavioral Health, funded by DHMH. To learn more about Dr. Koblinsky’s work, visit the UMD-PRC website: http://sph.umd.edu/center/prc or Maryland Veterans Resilience Initiative (MaVRI) website: http://sph.umd.edu/department/fmsc/about-maryland-veterans-resilience-initiative


Community Message

Ms. Ginger Miller, a Navy veteran and military spouse, is also the Founder and CEO of Women Veteran’s Interactive, (WVI) an organization with a mission to support women veterans through Advocacy, Empowerment, Interaction, Outreach, and Unification. Through its programs, WVI has engaged more than 750 women veterans including referrals for housing, education, health and employment services. Among her many accomplishments, Ms. Miller has served as Chairwoman of the Prince George’s County Veteran’s Commission and was presented with the 2013 White House “Women Veteran Champion of Change” award. Recently, Ms. Miller partnered with UMD faculty, Dr. Sally Koblinsky and Dr. Leigh Leslie, to investigate the challenges facing women veterans transitioning to civilian life after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Ms. Miller, one of the most critical health issues facing women veteran is access to mental health services. According to Ms. Miller, “Women veterans are more likely to suffer in silence as it relates to depression and other health issues. There is a huge need for peer support programs that will allow these women to open up in a safe environment, an environment that will allow them to come from behind the mask and get the help and support that they need, deserve and have earned ” For more information on the Women Veteran’s Interactive, visit the WVI website at: http://womenveteransinteractive.org/