Veterans Matter Rally to House America’s Homeless Veterans
Program Guide

Introduction and Purpose
The National Exchange Club is partnering with Veterans Matter, both based in Toledo, Ohio, to help house America’s homeless heroes. What started as a local project to house 35 local veterans has gone national, housing more than 700 of our nation’s heroes in 11 states, due in part to the support of 20+ celebrities, including Gene Hackman, Susan Sarandon, John Mellencamp, Dusty Hill, Gary Sinise, Katy Perry and others. Veterans Matter has a 100% success rate housing homeless veterans in the VA’s LONG-TERM supportive housing program, which has a 91% success rate keeping them housed! This is the real deal.

Our goal is to house 2,000 veterans over the next year. This averages out to three veterans per Exchange Club nationwide. Larger clubs can house many more. Your club will be working to house the homeless veterans in your community, region and across the nation — wherever there is a veteran waiting now for housing! The goal is that veterans sleeping on the streets tonight can get housed tomorrow.

This is a new program providing new energy for Exchange, which WILL attract new members to your club. Simply getting the word out to your community about the 11/11@7 Rally will tell your community your club cares enough about veterans to DO something. Feel free to stage this Veterans Day kickoff event together with other clubs. The more clubs you partner with and the more people you invite, the stronger your event will be. You will be demonstrating #ExchangeStrong. Every Monday, at noon EST, Veterans Matter will host an informational conference call for anyone interested in learning more. Just email call@veteransmatter.org for information.

We will be using the Veterans Matter FirstGiving Fundraising site to allow you to immediately fundraise (as there are veterans waiting now), see how many veterans other clubs are housing, see what other clubs are doing and promote your club’s efforts through your email, Facebook and personal and/or business contacts. Your club’s Rally Chair should create the team and your club members can join under the club team (www.firstgiving.com/1matters/exchangeclub). We want to note that the FirstGiving website charges a 7.5% processing fee, so we hope any donations more than $100 will be mailed directly to Veterans Matter with your club’s name in the memo. The address is 3450 W. Central Ave, Suite 108, Toledo, OH, 43606.

To kick off the yearlong campaign, most clubs nationwide will be hosting simultaneous fundraising rallies on Veterans Day, 11/11, at 7 p.m. These can be as small or as large as your club desires. But it all boils down to this: find a location; invite your friends, families, co-workers and business associates; and raise as much as you can to house as many veterans as we can, as fast as we can. Even one more night on the streets is one too many, especially since 24% of the veterans housed so far are families WITH CHILDREN!

Hosting an event on Veterans Day at 7 p.m. will make a national statement and will garner national and local press for your club and Exchange Clubs nationwide. This is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate how clubs work collaboratively to make America a better place to live. That is EXCHANGE STRONG!

No other membership organization does an event like this simultaneously. This will set you apart and be an opportunity for your club to showcase your Exchange Strong Americanism to your entire community and recruit new members. Best practice is to invite all local groups that care about veterans in your community, such as veteran-friendly businesses, VFWs, American Legions, veterans services organizations and the like.
Discovery

Have your Exchange Club’s board of directors assign a Rally Chairperson. This person will be extremely passionate about helping veterans and will be responsible for the event’s success, including identifying and recruiting Rally Coordinators. Though all Coordinators may come from your club, we recommend you invite members of your community, such as members of other veteran-friendly businesses or groups, to play a part in the leadership team for the “Veterans Matter 11/11@7 Rally to House America’s Homeless Veterans,” sponsored by: (Your Club(s) and other interested local groups). The more the merrier, as it allows maximum exposure of your club’s Americanism and commitment to veterans throughout the community.

The Rally Chairperson will create the club team on the Firstgiving fundraising software, distribute the Project Plan, get weekly reports from the Rally Coordinators and ensure the success of the event, as well as provide a results summary once the event is completed.

Veterans Matter will recognize the “National Top Ten Veterans Matter Hero Clubs” (small, medium and large club categories) with Certificates of Appreciation signed by some of the veterans housed by Veterans Matter. The “Veterans Matter National Hero Club of the Year” recognition will go to the top club in each of the three categories. These clubs will also get a stunning custom-designed trophy. All clubs will be recognized at the 2016 National Convention. The sole criteria will be the number of veterans housed at Veterans Matter’s national average of $750 per veteran or veteran family, as documented by the Veterans Matter Firstgiving fundraising platform at midnight, June 30, 2016.

Each club should also consider appointing a Logistics Coordinator, Marketing/PR Coordinator, Sponsorship/Fundraising Coordinator and Team Coordinator. All members will recruit the organizational Team Captains. These leaders will form the core of the Rally Committee, as well as any additional members of your community who would like to support your efforts. Again, the more people you invite, the better the exposure for your club and Exchange.

The Rally Committee will set the rally objectives, such as deciding how many veterans your club wants to help house, determining how many people will be needed to help, establishing the preliminary budget (t-shirts, location, food, advertising, etc), and, most importantly, recruiting the teams, organizations and businesses to sponsor, partner and participate in the fundraising for your Veterans Matter 11/11@7 Rally to House America’s Homeless Veterans, sponsored by your club(s).

Planning and Conducting

See the separate Event Planning Guide for the Veterans Matter 11/11@7 Rally to House America’s Homeless Veterans for more details. Again, in the simplest form, planning is comprised of finding a location; inviting your friends, families, co-workers and business associates; and then helping raise as much as we can to house as many veterans as we can, as fast as we can. Even one more night on the streets is one too many, especially for the 24% of veterans housed so far who are families WITH CHILDREN!

We hope every club will host an event of some kind, large or small (a club-sponsored dinner, community fundraising dinner, auction/silent auction, fundraising walk, wine tasting or other special event) on 11/11 @ 7.

#EXCHANGESTRONG! #GetVetsHoused
Veterans Matter Rally to House America’s Homeless Veterans

Event Planning

Veterans Day “11/11@7” is only a couple of months away so this will take a little concentrated effort, but the reward is worthwhile: veterans will be housed tonight, through every dollar raised. This is the perfect opportunity to show your community, and the nation, how important housing our heroes is to Exchange. We want to show your community and the nation that We Are Exchange Strong.

1. Club Board of Directors will identify and assign a Rally Chairperson.
2. Rally Chair will distribute copy of this Event Planning Guide to club members.
3. Rally Chair will identify and assign Rally Coordinators, who will form the Rally Committee. Though all Coordinators may come from your club, we recommend you invite members of your community, including members of other veteran-friendly businesses or groups to play a part in the leadership team. The more the merrier as it allows maximum exposure of your club’s Americanism and commitment to veterans throughout your entire community and the nation.

   i. Name of Team Coordinator(s) ________________________________________________

   ii. Name of Logistics Coordinator ________________________________________________

   iii. Name of Marketing/PR Coordinator ____________________________________________

   iv. Name of Sponsorship/Fundraising Coordinator __________________________________

Rally Team:

4. Set club and event objectives
   a. How many veterans would your club like to help house through this rally?
   b. How many veterans would your club like to help house this year?
   c. How many people do you want to attend this rally?
   d. How many people will be needed to help organize and execute this rally?
   e. List the people or groups you think care about veterans and should also be invited to participate in the Community Rally Planning meeting. Consider inviting members of your community, local businesses and other groups with compassion for veterans. These people can be part of your Sponsorship, Logistics, Publicity and Team Committees. Call and email them the same day to meet a week later if possible. Share with them your urgency about getting vets housed.

5. Choose your event. Possibilities include club-sponsored dinner, community fundraising dinner, auction/silent auction or special event (fundraising walks, wine tastings, etc.). The size of your event can be based on the size of your club and community. Remember, the larger your event, the more people in your community who will learn about your club’s patriotism. You can choose an event type that was successful for you in the past, or one that was successful for similar groups in the past. Our only wish is that you have an event of any type on 11/11 @ 7. This will cause the nation to notice National Exchange Club and your community to notice your club!
6. **Choose your venue.** You will want a location that can accommodate the size of your event and is available on 11/11 @ 7. It’s best to reserve the location as soon as the type and expected size of your event is identified. As a baseline, if every member committed to bring at least four people who care about veterans, you’d have a nice start. Once your team has agreed on the need, the Logistics Coordinator can secure/negotiate with the facility. Some locations may offer to donate their facility for your event. The lower we keep costs, the more veterans are housed.

7. **Choose your fundraising method(s).** Options include sponsorship levels, admission charge, silent auctions, utilizing the Veterans Matter FirstGiving fundraising site, ordering t-shirts or Veterans Matter pins/wristbands to sell (or give to sponsors and leaders). Decide what each level of sponsorship will include: Logo/name on walk t-shirt, advertisement in local media (maybe get media outlet to donate/discount space in return for name on t-shirt or banner). See Appendix for examples of the types of sponsorship levels used in the past, which can be customized to suit your club’s needs.

8. **Create invitation list for first organizational meeting.** This list should include members of your community, local businesses and other groups with compassion for veterans. These people can be part of your Sponsorship, Logistics, Publicity and Team Committees. Call or email them the invitation and schedule the organizational meeting as soon as possible (See Appendix). Share your urgency to get vets housed. The goal is to have every member of your club bring at least four people to the rally. To be sure, you should try and get commitments from at least eight people.

9. **Establish preliminary budget.** Facility rental, if needed; food, drink, ticket prices or door cover charge; advertising; printing; purchase of Veterans Matter buttons, t-shirts to advertise your event, or bumper stickers for sale at your event; etc. That will be an easy way to generate more funds! **Deadline to order buttons, t-shirts and bumper stickers is OCTOBER 15.**

10. **Rally Chair: Set up your club’s team on the Veterans Matter fundraising site** under “Operation Exchange Club” (www.firstgiving.com/1matters/exchangeclub). See the “How to Set Up Your Club Team” guide. Encourage fellow club members to sign up as team members under your club team. There will be a special recognition for the “100% Clubs” who have had all members sign up on your team.

11. **Logistics Coordinator: Secure and confirm rally location** based on the size of your club and expected crowd. As a baseline, if every member brought four people who care about veterans, you’d have a nice start.

12. **Convene community planning meeting.** Attendees at this meeting will identify/solicit potential sponsors. Best practice is to have the group list all potential sponsors and identify the best person to make each contact. It is everyone’s responsibility to help find sponsors. The Sponsorship Coordinator will follow up in seven days with each member for progress, and again seven days later. Remember, there are many people in your community who care about our heroes, so there is no need to “sell.” Your job is to spread the word so those who do care about veterans have the opportunity to join you. Obtain local co-sponsors and/or partners, such as veteran-friendly businesses, VFWs, American Legions, veterans services organizations and the like.

13. **Marketing/PR Coordinator: Create the flier.** You may create your own or use the provided template (See Appendix for a template, which can also be blown up to a poster). Add your location, time and club name as a sponsor, as well as admission prices, etc. Consider looking for a company that might donate printed materials. Then, distribute this flier community-wide in person and via email to everyone you know who cares about veterans.

14. **Identify media partners.** Reach out to every type of media you can think of! Ask local newspapers, TV stations and radio stations to donate advertising or promotion time to help your club get the word out. Get your Exchange Club and Veterans Matter’s names out there! Please use the hashtags #ExchangeStrong and #GetVetsHoused. Offer these outlets...
the opportunity to be listed as media sponsors on your event signage. (Many media outlets that aren’t in a
position to become official media sponsors may be willing to assign a reporter to do a story about the event or
invite a club representative to appear on a TV/radio show.)

15. Identify and recruit Rally Team captains. These captains will be your official representatives at their places of
business, organizations or churches. They will be responsible for spreading the word and distributing your fliers
and encouraging their members/employees to attend your event. To identify Rally Team captains, consider
those who could bring at least four people to the event. These captains do not have to be Exchangeites! They
will become your ambassadors for your club, getting the word out about your club and its support of veterans.
For many, once they see ALL you do for your community, they will choose to become members. This is why you
want to get the word out as far and as wide as you can. The more members you have, the more veterans that
can be housed. As an incentive, consider recognizing the top three Rally Team captains, those who bring the
most people to your event, with a gift card to a restaurant.

16. Marketing/PR: Create social media plan. Link your website, Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets to
Veterans Matter and your club’s Veterans Matter fundraising team page, so people can join or donate to your
club’s team. Make sure to let everyone know why it is so important to participate! Also, Veterans Matter has
20+ celebrities supporting them; feel free to share the celeb photos, videos and materials found at
veteransmatter.org/spreadtheword.

You will want to ensure that you have someone available to take photos and/or videos of your event. You can
post them on your club’s website to show the world how much fun it is to do something wonderful for the
heroes in your community! When you put them on Facebook or Twitter, add the hashtags #ExchangeStrong and
#GetVetsHoused

17. Marketing/PR: Distribute press release. We have created a press release template that clubs can edit as
necessary. Distribute it to all local media, including TV and radio stations, which may result in airtime to
announce or promote your event. We have found that if you call first to introduce yourself and your event,
 stressing how your community is part of a national effort, and then follow up with another phone call to see if
there are questions, you get results.

18. Sponsorship Coordinator & Rally Committee: Request auction/raffle items. As you visit your local businesses
and organizations to invite them and chat about sponsorship, also give them the opportunity to help you help
our veterans through donations in-kind. Ask if they would like to be a cash sponsor or let them donate
items/services that can be utilized in an auction, silent auction or raffle to help raise funds at your event.

19. Rally Coordinators, Rally Team Captains, All Members – Get the word out! Post fliers everywhere you can,
 including businesses, churches, libraries, grocery stores and gas stations. Ask local veterans organizations to post
the fliers. Anywhere there are a lot of people is an opportunity to let your community know what you are doing
to help our nation’s heroes!

Use your email! You can email your fliers to anyone and everyone. Be sure to include the link to your personal
page on the Veterans Matter FirstGiving fundraising website so they can donate or join your team. Once you
have registered your club’s team, look at your page, customize it and share it. There are easy ways to share it
through Facebook, Twitter and other social media. Feel free to share the celebrity videos and images as well,
found at veteransmatter.org/spreadtheword.

20. Sponsorship Coordinator: Finalize sponsors. Contact your sponsors. Answer any questions they may have about
your club, the Veterans Matter organization or the rally. Reach out again to those from whom you didn’t get a
response.

21. Logistics Coordinator: Plan food/beverages. Is your club’s event one that is going to provide food and
beverages? Make sure you get those details nailed down. Maybe it could be a “potluck” dinner! You will know
from your invitees how many people to expect, so make certain to order enough for everyone. Actually, order a little bit more – you never know who might decide to come at the last minute.

22. **Marketing/PR: Design your event signs and banners.** These will feature your partners, sponsors, donors and media partners. Once you have signoff, get it to the printer, hopefully one that is donating printing.

23. **Logistics Coordinator: Create event night plan.** Work with your entire committee to assign responsibilities for the night of, including who will be at the door, handling food, drinks, running the auctions, etc. Which dignitaries do you want to have speak? Which veterans would you like to have speak? Which club members would you like to have speak?

24. **Logistics Coordinator: Event cash, checks and credit cards.** Will you be accepting cash during your event? How about checks or credit cards? Do you have someplace secure to keep such things? Do you have receipt books? For credit cards, you can use the receipt template you will be provided, and use the provided credit card webpage, veteransmatter.org/donate (this page will have NO credit card processing fees!) or have guests use their smart phones to text “NEC” to 41444 (a link will come back to them and they can donate any amount on their credit card, again with no processing fees). All donors will be sent a donation receipt for tax purposes. Feel free to promote the “Text NEC to 41444” at your event and ask people tell you what they donated for tracking.

25. **Event Day! EVERYONE ON BOARD!** Everyone gets to help today! The Logistics Coordinator should ensure that everything is set up and ready to go! Have fun! Don’t forget to take photos and/or videos during the event, and then post them to your club’s website and social media, using the hashtags #ExchangeStrong and #GetVetsHoused.

26. **Rally Chair: Reconcile invoices/results summary.** Total the event’s donations (cash, checks and credit cards) and then enter the information on the Veterans Matter FirstGiving Fundraising site under your club’s team. Process donations through your normal channels and mail a single check to Veterans Matter, including a list of those you know texted donations (3450 W. Central Ave, Suite 108, Toledo, OH, 43606). Veterans Matter will add texted donations to your team totals once they clear. Reconcile invoices and gather all information to determine just how successful your event was, then report to your committee, club, sponsors, partners and the community!
CLUB PLEDGE

Nearly 50,000 veterans and veteran families with children are still on our streets. We have the power to join clubs nationwide to house the veterans in our community, region and nation.

Therefore (Club Name)__________________________, located in (City)__________________________, (State) _____, (Region) _____________________________________, pledges over the next year to house ________ unhoused veterans/veteran families with children in our community, region and nation. At the national average of $750 per veteran housed, we will raise at least $__________.

We also pledge to join other clubs nationwide and have an Exchange Strong club and/or community fundraising dinner or rally on Veterans Day, 11/11 at 7:00 pm.

Signed (Officer): ______________________________  Title:__________________________________
Email Address: __________________________________  Phone Number: _______________________