

A Venture to Help Veterans

Story by Judy Colbert

Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living and Balancelogic Partner So Vets Can Use Service Experience to Their Advantage

Lidiya Belyovska, executive director of the Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living, and Bill Campbell, a Marine Corps veteran and CEO of Balancelogic, saw a problem and proceeded to solve it.

"We've been working together for almost a decade," Campbell says. He has taught classes and has been a guest speaker at the nonprofit center which provides advocacy, information and education to promote independent living. Belyovska's clientele, from Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties, includes a number of veterans and they have needs beyond the center's capabilities, she says.

Campbell's company provides small business services solutions that include consulting, marketing, web and graphic design, search engine optimization, IT support and Avaya phone systems.

People who have served in the military might not necessarily be technically proficient and might not have the tools to work in a civilian workplace. Additionally, they don't necessarily know how to translate what they did in the service to the civilian workplace.

Campbell and Belyovska believed they could better utilize the center's space and focus on the needs of the veterans. The idea of a veterans training center developed from there.

After discussing the center's physical needs, Campbell's employees and other volunteers chipped in to paint and install the necessary equipment. Campbell donated computers, laptops, furniture and other equipment, and provides technical support to the center. The new facility was dedicated May 12, 2017, and can train up to five people at a time.

The veterans won't necessarily be trained for specific jobs. Rather, Campbell says, the instruction will be "more of overall life skills, the tools they need." It won't be as an administrative assistant or someone to repair elevators. The programs will teach veterans how to browse the Internet, prevent identity theft, write a resume and prepare for a job interview.

"Some of the training will be on basic computer skills, Microsoft Office, resume building, job search, and job and benefits application assistance," Belyovska adds.

"We don't know what they don't know," Campbell says.

"We are honored to give back to those who served our country"

-Lidiya Belyovska



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The Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living recently celebrated its opening. On hand were Bill Campbell, owner of Balancelogic, left; veteran John Schmiedel; Pam Ford, deputy executive director of SMCIL; veteran Maurice Scott; Lidiya Belyovska, SMCIL executive director; and Stacy Tobin, independent living and assistive technology specialist at SMCIL.

"They need life skills, and they need to know how to translate their service experience to their advantage. They know to be on time, how to pay attention to detail, and they're dedicated and loyal. These are skills that translate into civilian life."

From there, some specific skills might be taught, whether it's how to convert a Word document to a PDF, and how to use an iPhone and Microsoft Office applications.

At the moment, there are no specific jobs in mind. Campbell knows there are companies that are pushing to hire veterans. His company, with nine employees, is looking to hire vets.

Belyovska, Campbell and others will teach the classes. The big push now is to get the word out to let the veterans know there's a place for them and there isn't a charge for the instruction. They're also looking for a larger space and maybe opening other training centers in Southern Maryland — people who have space not being used for a year or two — so the services can be expanded. More space also would require more furniture and equipment.

"We're very, very happy with the program," Campbell says, "and we welcome any partners who want to join us in this venture."

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Belyovska says the Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living is excited to be able to partner with Balancelogic and offer veterans a training center where they can receive the support to accomplish their personal goals.

"We are honored to give back to those who served our country," she says. •

To learn more: The Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living's Disabled Veterans Support Network meets the second Friday of the month. The group is for disabled vets to attend and receive information about benefits, share their service stories, and receive peer support and a good meal. At every meeting, there is a speaker who gives information about programs and topics relevant to disabled veterans. Call 301-884-4498 or visit www.smcil.org.

Judy Colbert is the author of *100 Things to Do in Baltimore Before You Die* and a regular contributor to *Southern Maryland-This is Living*.

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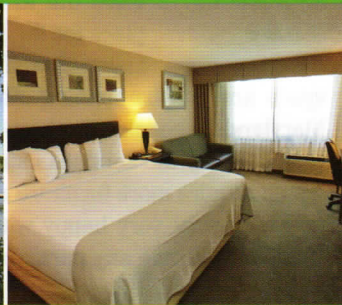


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