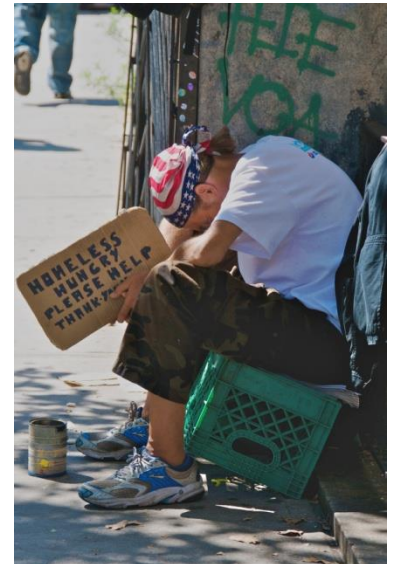


## Event Planning Guide for the **Veterans Matter** **11/11 @ 7 Rally to House America's Homeless Veterans**

*100% of the funds raised go to help house veterans locally, regionally or nationally, wherever the greatest need is. In other words, anywhere there is a veteran waiting for a home tonight, Exchange will be there!*

Veterans Day "11/11 @ 7" is only a couple of months away so this will take a little concentrated effort, but the reward is veterans will be housed tonight through every dollar you raise. Plus, with most other exchange clubs in the nation doing it at the same time, this is the perfect opportunity to show your community and the nation how important housing our heroes is to Exchange AND how powerful Exchange is as a national organization, not just local. We want to show your community and the nation we are Exchange Strong. But this only happens if we all have events on 11/11 @ 7.



- 1) Club Board of Directors will identify and assign a Rally Chairperson.
- 2) Distribute copy of this Event Planning Guide to Club.
- 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 other clubs and members of other veteran-friendly businesses or groups to attend a Rally Committee meeting and play a part in the Rally leadership team. A Rally Committee meeting can be held at the end of each of your regular meetings. This allows maximum exposure of your club's Americanism and commitment to veterans throughout your entire community and the nation.

Name of Team Coordinator(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Logistics Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Marketing/Publicity Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Sponsorship/Fundraising Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

### Rally Team:

- 4) **Set Club and Event Objectives**
  - a. How many veterans would your club like to help get housed from this rally?
  - b. How many veterans would your club like to help get housed 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.

This list will be to invite members of your community, 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 National Exchange Club State of Urgency to get vets housed.

- 5) **Choose your Event Type:** 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 will hear about your club and your patriotism. You can choose an event type that was successful for you in the past, or one that was successful for other groups you know in the past. Our only wish is that your event be on 11/11 @ 7.
- 6) **Choose your Venue:** You will want to find someplace that can handle 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 have a nice start. Once your team has agreed on the need, the Logistics Coordinator can secure/negotiate with the facility. Many locations may offer to donate their facility for your event. The lower we keep costs, the more veterans are housed.
- 7) **Choose your Fundraising Methods:** Assign each participating club or organization one of possible fundraising methods. Ideas include sponsorship levels, silent auctions, bake sale, wine tasting, using Veterans Matter's Donation Platform, ordering VM t-shirts, pins or wristbands to sell, 50/50 raffles, whatever works best for your community.
- 8) **Create Invite List for first Organizational Meeting.** This list will be to invite members of your community, 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 kick-off organizational meeting as soon as possible. Share with all your State of Urgency to get vets housed.
- 9) **Establish Preliminary Budget:** Facility rental if needed, food, drink, ticket prices or door cover charge, whether or not to purchase Veterans Matter buttons, t-shirts, or bumper stickers for sale at your event, advertising, printing, etc
- 10)
- 11) **Rally Chair: Set Up your Club Team on the Veterans Matter Fundraising site** under "Operation Exchange Clubs." ([www.firstgiving.com/1matters/exchangeclubs](http://www.firstgiving.com/1matters/exchangeclubs)) See the How to Set Up Your Club Team guide. Once it is set up, have all of your club members sign up as team members under your Club Team.
- 12) **Logistics Coordinator:** Secure and confirm the rally Location based on the size of event and expected crowd. As a baseline, if every member brought four people who care about veterans, you have a nice start.
- 13) **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 at this meeting 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 just get the word out there so those who do care about veterans at least have the opportunity to get involved. Obtain local sponsors and/or partners such as veteran-friendly businesses, VFWs, American Legions, Veterans Services Organizations and the like.

- 14) **Marketing/PR Coordinator:** Create the flier. You may create your own or use the provided template. (See [VeteransMatter.org/nec](http://VeteransMatter.org/nec) for a template for a flier, 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. Maybe look for company that might donate printed material. Then distribute this flier community-wide in person and email it to all you know who care about veterans.
- 15) **Identify Media Partners:** Reach out to every type of media that you can think of! See if local papers, TV, radio will donate advertising or promotion time to help your clubs get the word out. Get your Exchange Club and Veterans Matter’s name out there! In exchange they will be listed as media sponsors on all of your event signage as being a hero to the heroes you are working to serve. (Note: 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 radio/TV show, which also helps spread the word about your event.)
- 16) **Marketing/PR -- Social Media Plan:** Using your website, Facebook, Twitter (Please use the hash tags #ExchangeStrong and #GetVetsHoused) and other social media, link to Veterans Matter and be sure to link and promote your Veterans Matter fundraising team page so people can join or donate to your club’s team. Make sure to let everyone know exactly what you have going and why it is so important to participate! Also, Veterans Matter has 20+ celebrities supporting them; feel free to share the celeb pix, videos and materials at [veteransmatter.org/spreadtheword](http://veteransmatter.org/spreadtheword).
- 17) **Marketing/PR – Press Release:** We have created a press release template. Feel free to edit as you see fit or create your own. Distribute it to all local media, including TV and radio stations, many of which will have you on as a guest to announce or promote your event. We have found that if you call first to introduce you 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 – Auction/Raffle Items:** Everyone can help and go to your local businesses and organization to invite them and chat about sponsorship, also give them the opportunity to help you help our veterans through donations in kind. You can 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 or gas stations. Ask local veterans organizations to post the fliers in their locations. 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 sponsor you, 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 on your Facebook, Twitter and other social media. Feel free to share the celeb videos and images as well, found at [veteransmatter.org/spreadtheword](http://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. Re-contact those you didn't get a response from.
- 21) **Logistics Coordinator – Food/Beverages:** Is your club's event one that is going to have food and beverages available to your guests? Make sure you get those details nailed down. Maybe it could be a "potluck" dinner! You will know from your invitees how many people you will be expecting 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 as word grows.
- 22) **Marketing/PR – Design your event signs and banners** that will be on display at your event. These will feature your partners, sponsors, donors and media partners. Once you have signoff, get it to the printer, hopefully one who 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 speak? Which veterans would you like to speak? Which club members would you like to 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 secured to keep such things? 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](http://veteransmatter.org/donate) (This page will have NO credit card processing fees!) or have guests use their smart phones and 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 have them tell you what they donated for tracking.

**Event Day! EVERYONE ON BOARD!** Everyone gets to help today! The Logistics Coordinator will have made sure that everything is set up and ready to go! Have fun! Don't forget to take photos or video during the event and post them to your club's website and social media, using the hashtags #ExchangeStrong and #GetVetsHoused.

- 25) **Rally Chair – Reconcile Invoices/Results Summary.** Total event night donations of 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 community.

- 26) **Rally Committee – Debrief and Evaluate to do better next year.**