The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization name:
Warrior Gateway

Organization URL:
http://www.warriorgateway.org/

Project Name:
Warrior Gateway's G.I. Network

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

Veterans returning home from service are struggling with where to find the right information and resources to ease their transition from active to veteran status. Additionally, organizations and agencies have trouble connecting with veterans as they move forward with their day-to-day lives. Recognizing this problem, Warrior Gateway was established. Led by former and active military personnel, government leaders, and businesses with a vested interest in our troops, Warrior Gateway helps connect veterans and their families to government resources in a seamless and positive way. The Warrior Gateway portal enables users to network, map and search through thousands of services and veteran programs, allowing access to anything from career exploration to health assistance in their local community, as well as the ability to communicate with members of local veteran chapters, providing access to a larger support-based community. Its newest project, the G.I. Network, takes the Warrior Gateway portal a step further by offering an easy solution for today's government and non-profit organizations to share relevant resources and services in one centralized location, making it the largest consolidated site for veteran information. The G.I. Network is an online tool developed to transform the mission to help America's veterans find needed resources in response to the Joining Forces initiative. It helps our veterans make better decisions about what resources to use, as well as provide a public forum to share experiences about the quality and effectiveness of those services. With the G.I. Network, Warrior Gateway is redefining how veterans can search for assistance and share information. In 2011, Warrior Gateway aimed to include 100,000 organizations and service providers within the

G.I. Network database. Since then, the G.I. Network has surpassed that mark, housing resources from over 222,000 vetted government and non-profit organizations.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

The G.I. Network links thousands of government programs and non-profit organizations with millions of veterans across the U.S. all under the same roof. Using a virtual platform, it can be operated for free on any website. By simply placing a search bar on its website, federal, state and local organizations can provide veterans with access to the entire G.I. Network database. This functionality enables veterans to learn about hometown resources and services efficiently, without accessing multiple websites. This first-of-its-kind platform amplifies the reach of veteran resources and provides tools that encourage veterans to contribute their own comments and suggestions, creating a community of relevant users, crowding out less reliable sources of information, and generating a go-to destination for veteran support. The challenge faced when developing the G.I. Network was how to collect information from a multitude of data sources in disparate formats into one central repository. Leveraging MarkLogic as an operational database which also powers search, it is able to take these "unstructured" data sources and organize them into a structure that is user-friendly and simple for veterans to search in a meaningful way. Warrior Gateway also recognized that one out of every five homeless people is a veteran. As such, they partnered with LinkedIn to develop a mobile app, Homeless Vet Patrol, which leverages the technology of the G.I. Network to extend aid to homeless people and assist shelters and VA centers aimed at combating homelessness. The app enables citizen to "click" a button on their mobile device when they see a homeless individual. Local veteran and homeless organizations are then able to view the aggregated information and direct help more efficiently. The app received recognition for its innovation, ranking third in LinkedIn's "Veterans Hack" day competition.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

With the current withdrawal of troops in Iraq, an estimated 250,000 troops will transition back to the United States in 2012. The need to link veterans and their families with hometown services has never been more vital. This is what the G.I. Network was designed to do. It connects veterans and their families with more than 222,000 government and non-profit organizations and empowers the veteran community to openly share information about services in their community, including education, employment, health, and wellness programs. Using the collaborative platform, federal, state and local agencies, and veteran and health organizations can share information efficiently with those who need it the most, as well as offer personalized services that cater to the needs of their particular constituents. Whether it's determining the closest place to receive medical treatment or obtaining information about community support groups, veterans now have a reliable resource for help. This is particularly relevant today, as the well being of our veterans is a top priority of the current administration, as noted in this year's State of the Union address. The G.I. Network is one of the first public private partnerships openly sharing information in the veteran space, at no cost to either party.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

Ian is a combat-tested helicopter pilot and member of the Army National Guard. However, it was his role as Army ROTC instructor that led him to the Warrior Gateway portal. With the closest military medical clinic over an hour away, Ian's challenge was to get his team of 15 vaccinated

against the flu by the end of October. Using the Warrior Gateway platform, Ian found a VA outpatient clinic nearby that the team was unaware of, and was able to call and schedule a shot clinic for his unit, as well as share a new, more convenient medical resource for those who live, study and serve in the nearby community. "The clinic called back very quickly and confirmed it would be no problem at all for us to get our flu shots; they'd be happy to help us," said Ian. "Overall, it was a great experience and a great find for our unit." Beth opened her home to Justin, a wounded Marine and family friend for many years. In August, Justin found himself out of the Marine Corps awaiting benefits, with no income and job, and struggling to overcome the devastating effects of post-traumatic stress and a mild traumatic brain injury. Sitting down together, she and Justin used the Warrior Gateway portal to locate the nearest vet center. Beth was pleased when the online mapping tool showed just how close "nearby" can be, only 2.4 miles from their house. That same day, they visited the center to collect information and materials about support groups and services, and Justin is now reviewing everything to see what speaks to him. "I'm hopeful that between this and other resources Justin will find on the Warrior Gateway [portal], successful civilian life is well within his grasp," stated Beth.