

-Suntari Social Innovation L3C



**PROJECT:
REVIVE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have earned their place in history as the longest running engagement fought with all volunteer forces. With repeated deployments and the stress of unconventional warfare, The RAND Corporation's Invisible Wounds of War project shows that 18.5% of OIF/OEF Veterans experience PTSD or depression, and 19.5% experience TBI (Tanielian and Jaycox, 2008). Furthermore, Rand's more recent report estimates that 20 to 30% of OIF/OEF deployed service members may be affected by PTSD/TBI. This is alarming when over the next five years, one million service members will leave active duty.

National attention on veterans' unemployment in recent years has resulted in a host of programs to help employ veterans. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor both run programs to help veterans find jobs, and first lady Michelle Obama has championed efforts to reduce veteran unemployment. The state was home to 87,840 female Veterans as of September 2012, giving North Carolina the sixth-highest such population in the country (News and Observer, 2013). According to the most recent information from U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, the estimated population of Durham County in 2012 is 279,641. Of this number 15,688 are Veterans representing 5.61% of the population. In North Carolina, where the unemployment rate among female veterans is more than double that of their male counterparts, according to an analysis of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The jobless rate among female veterans in the state averaged 14.8 percent in 2011 and 2012.

Durham and neighboring communities will be hard pressed to respond despite their determination to ensure a better transition for these Veterans into careers in the civilian sector. Moreover, it is clear that the systems designed to support veterans in education and employment require capacity building to improve their quality. It's evident that, specific training on the nature of female Veteran unique needs, and PTSD/TBI for staff supporting these veterans would improve the value of these services. To do this it needs to develop good methods of summarizing the current knowledge and to let develop from this knowledge prototypical interventions; these interventions should be derived from the most current scientific knowledge and should be more effective than traditional interventions.

Goals

i-Suntari's well-trained staff will take a unique holistic and STEM-based approach in the rehabilitation and education of our Veteran population to ensure that they leave our REVIVAL program as successful agribusiness leaders with the power to create positive social change.

Solution

i-Suntari Social Innovation a service disabled Veteran-owned social venture, spearheads REVIVAL (Re-Establish Veteran's Independence through Ventures in Agri-based Lifework), a community-based wellness, workforce and entrepreneurial development initiative comprised of various private, nonprofit and academic actors; experienced at identifying, developing and implementing programs and policies that enable Veterans to become self-sufficient and re-discover their life purpose. i-Suntari will initially function as a Veteran service organization, coordinating supportive services to serve the unique needs of female combat Veterans, ensuring their financial, emotional and social wellness resulting in life-long success.

Project Outline

CHI Therapy program (**CA**ARE **H**orticulture **I**ntegrative Therapy)

- CHI is an integrative medicine and wellness program that connects holistic wellness interventions (mind, body, and spirit) with horticulture therapy to promote both mental and physical recovery of our service-disabled and/or homeless Veteran population. CHI is the term for the universal energy, or the energy that permeates everything around us and inside us. As the name implies, our aesthetic CHI horticulture therapy garden will increase physical activity, reduce stress, improve health, nutrition, and socialization of our Veteran participants. Once Veterans have graduated from the Chi Therapy program, they will have the option to enter REVIVAL and/or COMRADES-in-ARMS vocational training. The aims of these latter programs are to stimulate economic opportunities for service-disabled Veteran's by capacity building with local private and public sectors.

REVIVAL Program (**RE**-establish **V**eteran's **I**ndependence through **V**entures in **A**gri-based **L**ifework)

- The REVIVAL program is committed to teaching Veterans the science and business behind small-scale organic and Aquaponic farming (urban or rural communities) that creates future employment opportunities building healthy community assets. The ultimate goal is to teach and support Veterans in the establishment of their own commercial "green" farms or agricultural related industries leading to self-sufficiency.

COMRADE-in-**ARMS** program (**COM**mmercialization & **R**esearch in **A**gribusiness **D**evelopment and **R**eliable **M**anufacturing **S**ervices)

- COMRADE-in-ARMS aims to create joint-business ventures with graduates of CHI and REVIVAL. The program will also support the Research & Development and Commercialization of i-Suntari Agribusiness and Manufacturing products. For those seeking to return into the workforce i-Suntari will connect them with our community partners specialized in career placement services for agribusiness and manufacturing industries.