

# Newton Daily News

## FVCIA gives veterans opportunity to farm

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The board of Farmer Veteran Coalition of Iowa after they held their statewide conference meeting on Dec. 14. FVCIA was founded to offer veterans, interested in farming, a chance to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to become involved in the agriculture industry.

By Ty Rushing Daily News Staff Writer

A new organization is offering a chance for Iowa's veterans to swap their combat boots out for work boots.

The Farmer Veteran Coalition of Iowa was created with the sole purpose of helping Iowa's veterans, who are interested in farming, gain the skills and experience necessary to becoming contributing members of the state's robust agriculture-based economy.

Iowa is one of the national leaders in agricultural production and led the U.S. in both corn and soybean production in 2013.

Locally, Jasper County Veterans Affairs Director Chris Chartier is a supporter of the FVCIA program.

"There are many benefits for both new and experienced farmers through FVCIA," Chartier said. "Farming, just like the military, has many aspects that cannot be taught in a classroom. It is a skill set that is normally taught through tradition and experience, and passed down through friends and family alike."

This year, FVCIA will be hosting four workshops for veterans to attend to gain some insight and networks within the farming community. The first workshop will be in Ottumwa on Feb. 20, the second on Feb. 22 in Waterloo, the third is on March 13, in Red Oak and the fourth will be on March 15, in Storm Lake.

Chartier explained the importance of these workshops for interested veterans.

“Many returning veterans, who are interested in agriculture, may not have these local ties making it difficult for them to pursue or even hesitant to give it a chance,” Chartier said. “I would urge any local farmers, who have served in the military, to look into the program and see if it is right for them.”

FVCIA is funded through a grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University and its board of directors includes a number of people who are influential within both the agriculture and veteran circles within Iowa.

Ed Cox, chairman of the FVCIA board and a veteran himself, explained how they decided what this program should offer veterans after their statewide conference on Dec. 14 in Des Moines.

“The veterans in attendance covered the agricultural spectrum and are very diverse,” Cox said. “Some are returning to family farm operations, while others are looking for land and capital to start growing specialty crops or value added enterprises. The thing they all have in common is a history of service and a desire to continue that service by providing secure, healthy food to their communities.”

Chartier encourages both farmers and veterans to take advantage of this program.

“Just joining the list of veteran farmers in our local community builds the confidence of these young men and women (and shows) that they are not doing this alone,” Chartier said.

To stay abreast of what FVCIA is doing, visit them online at: <http://iowafarmerveteran.org/>