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TCMHS Announces AmeriCorps*VISTA Member Joins the Team

VISTA Volunteer to Build Capacity for Serving Veterans and Family Members

LEWISTON, ME — August 24, 2011 — Last week Jerry DeWitt OF New Gloucester began a year of service as an AmeriCorps*VISTA member with Tri-County Mental Health Services. AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty through capacity-building activities. VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency to develop or expand sustainable programming.

DeWitt is a well-known advocate for Veteran's issues in Maine. A Vietnam Era veteran himself, DeWitt also served in Iraq in 2008 with the American Red Cross. He was instrumental in the successful effort to bring the Community Based Outpatient Clinic for Veterans to Lewiston. He is also a nurse, EMT, Licensed Social Worker and Substance Abuse Counselor and has been recognized for Volunteer Leadership. "We know that only 30% of Maine Veterans who are eligible have applied for VA benefits, and that many do not use mental health and health care services that could be beneficial for them," he says. "My work will be to help get them connected and to help providers respond with coordinated services." Jerry will be available to speak to groups and organizations about veterans' issues and building networks to address emerging needs such as housing and legal issues.

"We are thrilled to have Jerry on board to help strengthen the network of support for our military veterans and their families, and we look forward to collaborating with our colleagues to make sure services are accessible locally," says Tina Clark, TCMHS Director of Development & Community Relations. As Maine's most comprehensive agency dealing with the psychological and social well-being of children, adults, and elders, TCMHS is committed to meeting the unique needs of veterans and family members and improving local access across western Maine. The agency offers a range of treatment services shown to be effective in promoting recovery from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Substance Abuse and other conditions veterans may experience.

TCMHS serves more than 11,000 people each year. This year the agency marks its 60th year of providing innovative programs and services addressing mental health, substance abuse, mental retardation/developmental disabilities, autism, and more. Its philosophy of building toward recovery and sensitivity to traumatic experiences of consumers gives hope to individuals, families, and communities in Androscoggin, Northern Cumberland, Franklin, Oxford and York counties. For more information, visit www.tcmhs.org or call 1-888-304-HOPE(4673).

DeWitt is serving as part of the Maine VISTA Project. The Maine VISTA Project offers members a variety of opportunities to serve that include developing or expanding programs related to Veterans & Military Families, Education, Healthy Futures, and Economic Opportunity. This 26-member project is sponsored by the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS). MCCS builds capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities. Funding for the Maine VISTA Project is provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

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For more information on community service in Maine:

<http://www.maineservicecommission.gov/>