





The December Parade in Plano used to be the domain of the Lion's Club, but now Rotary is responsible for the 12/10 event. In theory, the City of Plano will pay us to put it on...eventually. They've not yet reimbursed us for 7/4!

Janelle will issue emails with "Save the Dates" notices.

Jeff thanked **Maria Mott** for inviting him to a Chamber meeting, which he found delightfully informal. Well, this is where the West begins, or thereabouts.

Janelle introduced the speaker: **Jackey Babb**, having served honorably in the Army during Desert Storm/Shield, returned to Texas and began his journey of volunteering, helping other veterans access resources and mental health services he'd come to rely, and advocate for veterans in need. Utilizing skills he'd gained while volunteering, he obtained the necessary certification to volunteer formally as a peer group facilitator. Once establishing himself as a dedicated partisan for veterans in the community, he decided to change directions in his life and work for veterans full-time. Currently, Jackey is the Peer Services Coordinator for *LifePath Systems* of Collin County under the authority of the Texas Veterans Commission.



Jackey pummeled us with the statistic that over the last 32 years, more military personnel have died by their own hand than have been killed in combat. Military suicides are occurring at the "highest rate in history." The VA is supposed to help in this regard, but it has earned a bad press for being so slow to respond that vet-

erans are left believing "*there's nobody here to help.*"

He asked veterans in the room at what age they enlisted: **Jerry Aris** 18; Mike McCormack 20; Jackey Babb 19. Jackey "*wanted to be a Man,*" so he got married and went into the military. His wife was unenthusiastic about Operation Desert Storm, having endured his absence during Basic Training. He hadn't asked for her blessing.

In Iraq, he saw things "*at 19 that I should not have seen.*" That 1990 war left him with PTSD that was not diagnosed until 2006. Between those dates, he "*self-medicated*" into oblivion. He had nightmares and flashbacks; they changed him. His wife left him for another man. It all left him with an "*inability to live life on life's terms.*" It was when he realized that he "*wanted to die more than I wanted to drink*" that he asked for help. He's been sober since 2015. <Applause>

The VA was able "*to walk me day-by-day, idea-by-idea, out of the Hell that I had created for myself.*" He is neither a counselor nor a clinician, but a victim who can share his experiences with vets undergoing the same thing. And that's vital.

Judge **John Roach** at the North Texas Veterans Board encouraged Jackey to take advantage of his recovery. In the fall of 2015, he volunteered with the Military Veteran Peer Network, which provides Crisis Intervention Training. He is now its Coordinator for Collin County.

He not only educates vets but also law enforcement officers who are often the first responders to vet crises. He often shows up at jail where a vet has been incarcerated to lend an empathetic ear. He's been there, done that.

He hosts a luncheon every month, explaining the resources available to vets in crisis, and letting them know how to improve their lives.



He offers **Military Cultural Competency Training** to groups, who, for example, might not know that Marines do not consider themselves “soldiers.” Such “*education avoids barriers.*”

PTSD miscalibrates your moral compass. You often end up with moral injuries causing you to react inappropriately to violence, for example. It can lead to belligerence toward female vets or male-on-male sexual trauma. “Friendly fire” incidents sabotage the individual

who cannot make sense of it. “Shell shock” is its old term.

John Priest asked whether the perpetrator or the victim suffers moral injury. And the answer was Yes and the bystanders as well. They all become “*tethered to the wrong thing.*”

Suicide prevention involves active listening and sometimes convincing the victim to give up his weapon until he can seek help. When help is well-received, Judge Roach hands out awards and can seek to expunge criminal records.

He has arranged for law enforcement to carry MREs (Meals Ready-to-Eat) in their cruisers to hand out to homeless vets they encounter. They can offer modest hope to those contemplating suicide, the majority of which are not enrolled in any service!

**Mary Jo Dean** asked how Jackey bonds with jailed vets. He told her it was because he had been jailed four times for DUI. He knows “*what’s tearing them apart.*” In the “you have to want to change” moment, he said, “*nobody could convince me that my life was wrong; life convinced me.*” Asking the help was “*the hardest thing; I almost didn’t. But when I did, I had a moment of clarity.*”

**Joe Camarena** has had two daughters in the military. One came to admit her PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and he got her into a recovery program. Eight months later, she’s 95% of the way home. Jackey said the trick is to catch victims when they are vulnerable to change. Joe asked, “*what about families who don’t communicate?*” Jackey said the VA doesn’t offer help to families, only individual vets.

Jeff McKee asked about Al Anon-type programs and was told there are no such for vets.

John Priest asked who pays and learned that the State of Texas pays. There are 56 such programs across the state, one per populous county. LifePath Systems takes the State’s contract.

Janelle thanked the speaker, led us in the 5-Way Test, and closed the program at 1:01.



**Jeffrey McKee**

**Proposed by:** Joe Camarena

**Classification:** Real Estate

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Thank you Toni Wilson

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Jeffrey McKee

**Guest of**

Joe Camarena

**Visiting Rotarian**

none

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