



# 2024 Veteran Services

Committee of the Whole

Oct. 7, 2025

Director: Justin Kent

ACVSO: Marissa LaCourt

Admin: Liz Friis

# Agenda

1. Transportation program discussion
2. Veteran Services 2024 activities & achievements

# Veteran Transportation Program

# Summary

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) provides a ride service for veterans comparable to the Goodhue County Veteran Services program.

We are asking the County Commissioners to weigh the option of switching the rides service for veterans from the County to the DAV.

# Program Financials<sup>1</sup>

	2022	2023	2024
Rides provided <sup>2</sup>	*	*	666
Donations	\$22,046	\$20,334	\$12,948
Expenses			
Mileage reimbursement	\$46,177	\$55,769	\$40,517
Per diem		\$3,900	\$13,600
Vehicle Maintenance <sup>3</sup>			
Fuel <sup>4</sup>			

**Notes:**

1 Does not include staffing

2 Data not available for 2023 & 2024

3 Maintenance charged to motor pool budget

4 Fuel added to budget starting in 2025

# Program Comparison

	Goodhue County	DAV
Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 week notice</li><li>• Shorter notice allowed, but ride not guaranteed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 week notice required</li></ul>
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Door-to-door service</li><li>• Usually single passenger rides</li><li>• Little to no waiting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Door-to-door service</li><li>• More group rides</li><li>• Longer wait times at VA</li></ul>
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paid mileage (\$0.70/mile) when using personal vehicle</li><li>• Paid per diem (\$100/day) when using county van</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteer are not paid</li><li>• DAV is relying on some current drivers switching to non-paid</li></ul>
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ~ \$ 42,000/yr</li><li>• Donations accepted to offset costs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No cost to the County</li></ul>

# Discussion

# **Veteran Services 2024 Activities & Achievements**



# VetPro Interactions

	2023	2024
Telephone	5,825	2,652*
Email	1,201	834
In-person	1,028	960
Fax	739	555
Mail	208	41
Unspecified	353	527
Total	9,354	5,569

\* Online signup for volunteer drivers led to significant drop in call volume

# VA Claims

- 287 Claims Filed
  - (300;2023)
- Claims
  - Appeal; 2
  - Increase; 28
  - Initial; 207
  - Supplemental; 29
  - Higher Level Reviews
    - CAR; 5
    - HLR; 14
  - CUE's; 3
- 323 Claims Decided
  - (2023;172)
  - 187 Awarded; 57.8% (121;71%)
  - 87 Denied; 26.9% (45;26%)
  - 15 Cancelled; 4.6% (untracked)
  - 14 Continued; 4.3% (untracked)
  - 20 Partial; 6.1% (untracked)
- VSO
  - Justin – 192 Claims
  - Phil – 119 Claims
  - Marissa – 8 Claims

# Homeless Veterans

- Veterans
  - 15 veterans Served (2023;8)
  - 12 Veteran's Housed (2023;8)
  - 1 Homeless veteran (2023;0)
- No longer taking veterans from outside the county
- Beyond the Yellow Ribbon
  - Spent \$43,000
- Veteran's Services
  - Spent \$13,000
  - Utilized Grants and Donations, not levied

# Outreach

- Remote Office Hours

- Ev. 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday: AL Pine Island (3-5pm)
- Ev. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday: Cannon Falls (5-7pm)
- Ev. 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday: Cannon Falls (5-7pm)
- Ev. 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday: Zumbrota (3-5pm)
- Removed Lake City and Kenyon
  - Lack of participation

- Attending VSO Meetings

- 3-month rotation; 1/quarter

- Meetings with county and regional resources

## Meetings and County Resources

- Veteran's Day Services
- Memorial Day Services
- VA Women's Clinic Groundbreaking
- Justice Involved Veterans
- MDVA HVR
- MDVA SOAR
- MACV Veteran's Stand Down
- Three Rivers CAP
- Funeral Home Veteran's meetings
- Hastings Veteran's Home Meetings
- Preston Veteran's Home Meetings
- Representation on MDVA Women's Mental Health Commission
- Women's Health VHA Community Care
- Beyond the Yellow Ribbon
- 3M and veteran's employment
- Xcel Power Plant veteran's employment
- GC HHS; overlapping services
- Coffee and Camaraderie

# Justice Involved Veterans

## New Partnerships

- Goodhue County Court staff
- Department of Corrections
- Probation Department
- MDVA Justice Involved Veteran Team

## Barriers

- Rural Environment limits VA medical resources for incarcerated veterans
- Low veteran population limits needs for full programming support
- No operating procedure is currently in place to utilize all benefits
- Low justice involved veterans in the county (not a bad thing)

## Solutions

- Offering Push in Veteran Services to act as a liaison between Corrections and VA
- Building a relationship with Probation to ensure all Veteran benefits are being utilized
- Continuing to work with Corrections and the VA to build a sustainable operating procedure

# Women's Veteran Program

- Women make up roughly 10% of the Veteran population, it is the fastest growing population, and the least recognized in the country.
- Women specific health care continues to remain at the forefront of issues, and limits women's health care options.
- Women in rural communities are often not serviced, due to limited resources.
- Our office acts as a liaison to ensure that women are receiving equal care to the men.
- Our office is advocating and pushing for bad practice to be changed, to ensure women are provided with safe and competent medical care. One big example is complaints, our office assists the veteran to file an appropriate complaint, then we follow up to ensure that policy has changed, and a solution is reached.
- Sitting on women's health care committees to ensure rural Minnesota is represented, and decisions are made with rural communities in mind.
- Currently sitting on a committee to expand services for eating disorders, and to promote research to find correlation between eating disorders and PTSD
- Working with the VA to ensure that MST victims are treated with respect and dignity, and provided with the same benefits as male veterans.

# Legislation & Advocacy

## Federal Law Change

- Proposed Amending 38 US Code 1116B – Expand the Presumptive Period for Veterans that served on the Korean DMZ for exposure to Agent Orange due to soil Contamination.
- Advocating for The Guard Act - Adding in regulations imposing fee and other penalties against unaccredited parties, known as the Claim Shark Bill.
- Opposing Veteran's CHOICE Act – Allows Claims Sharks to become accredited.

## State Legislative Changes

- Increase in property tax exclusion for disabled veterans in from the 150k to 200k for 70% and Higher, and 300K to 400K for the veterans that are 100% permanent in totally disabled.
- Change language in the current Property tax law to coincide with VA programs regarding surviving spouses, to ensure that a surviving spouse is not denied a benefit based on wanting to downsize a residence.
- Expand funding for food services for Veterans that are suffering from food insecurity and expand those benefits to rural MN.
- Work with our nonprofit partners to advocate for Charitable Gambling tax reform to allow more money to go into the community and less into the state.
- Expand the benefit for the free driver's license, free car registration, and no sales tax on vehicles for veterans that are 100% P&T, to include surviving spouses.
- MN Law 197.604 which currently states that any person who pays for CVSO services would be subject to gross misdemeanor charges, this does not align with spirit of the law, and should be rewritten to any government employee who charges fees unlawfully should be held accountable.

# State of the VA

- VA has processed 2.5 million claims so far this year.
  - 200k HLR's
  - High rate of denials continues
- VA has reached its goal of 15% reduction in force.
- VA is still on mandatory overtime
- MDVA Veteran's homes are at 50% capacity due to staffing.
  - CNA/RN state pay rates not competitive with private medical; pay rates.
- MDVA Stopped providing bronze star flag holders
  - Price per star went from \$60 to \$200
  - Looking for alternate resources



# Questions?