



# The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

## 2021 Honor Guard Training Conference Rescheduled for Sep. 30

September, 2021

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Photo is from the 2019 Honor Guard Conference

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual New Mexico Honor Guard Training Conference originally scheduled for August 19 is now set for September 30.

Honor guards are encouraged to attend. The conference is at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque, located at 1100 Louisiana Boulevard SE. The conference begins at 9am, but honor guards are encouraged to check beginning at 7:45am.

Honor guards are all-volunteer units that perform the flag-fold ceremony, 21-rifle volley, and a bugle rendition of *Taps* at the funerals of active-duty service members or veterans—providing a proper “Final Salute” befitting men and women who have served our country in the U.S. Armed Forces. DVS, the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP New Mexico presents this annual conference as a learning and training opportunity for honor guards from throughout the state. Instruction and coaching will be provided by a U.S. Army Honor Guard.

All attendees will be required to wear safety masks, and the groups will be spaced apart as a further safety precaution. Individuals or groups interested in forming an all-volunteer honor guard are encouraged to attend to obtain information and to register with DVS as an official honor guard unit.

The highlight of the conference is the two-tiered performance competition between large and small-size honor guards. A free catered lunch will be provided courtesy of AARP-New Mexico. For more information, contact Deanna Anaya at [deanna.anaya2@state.nm.us](mailto:deanna.anaya2@state.nm.us) or (505) 827-6356.

## 2021 Forgotten Heroes Funeral Set For September 23

The unclaimed cremated remains of twenty-one military veterans – who, upon their deaths went unclaimed by family members--will be laid to rest at the 2021 *Forgotten Heroes Funeral* at the Santa Fe National Cemetery on September 23 at 11am.

The cemetery is located in the city's north side at 501 North Guadalupe Street. The cremains will be interred with military honors in accordance with the state's *Forgotten Heroes Burial Program*. The public is invited to attend and serve as "family" in this funeral for these veterans who have served our country. Safety masks will be required to be worn by all attendees and staff.



*Last year's Forgotten Heroes Funeral*

## The Forgotten Heroes Funeral Program



*The first Forgotten Heroes Funeral, in 2009.*

The Forgotten Heroes Funeral Program was established in 2009 by DVS, along with Bernalillo County and the state Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI), as a state program to ensure that no honorably discharged veteran will be alone and forgotten in the end—and to provide a military burial option available to all deceased honorably-discharged veterans.

According to New Mexico state law, deceased indigent men or women—or deceased men or women who are unclaimed by family—are cremated, and the cremated remains are kept by counties for up to two years in hopes of eventually being claimed. Unclaimed

cremains can be disposed of after two years.

The Forgotten Heroes Program has changed this process for indigent or unclaimed decedents verified as an honorably discharged veteran by county officials, VA, and OMI. This original partnership has now expanded to include the Santa Fe National Cemetery, Daniels Family Funeral Services of Albuquerque, the New Mexico National Guard, the American Legion Riders, Albuquerque Police, New Mexico State Police, Sandoval County Sherriff's Office, Santa Fe County Sherriff's Office, and the Santa Fe Police Department.

Since the program's inception, 174 previously forgotten veterans have been provided this funeral befitting a man or woman who has served our country. DVS would like to thank Bernalillo County and OMI for helping to develop this unique program, which was the first such state-sponsored program in the nation. DVS would also like to thank the other partner agencies, and grateful veterans and members of the public, for helping us provide this "final salute" to ensure that no veteran will be forgotten in the end.



## More than 800 Commemorative Bricks Laid at the 14th Annual Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire Bricklaying

More than 800 veterans memorial bricks were placed on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire on September 4 during an annual Labor Day weekend bricklaying.

The red bricks were purchased through the David Westphall Memorial Foundation by anyone wanting to honor a military service member or veteran—living or deceased. Each brick bears the name of the veteran or service member, his or her branch of service, and the years served. Bricks with no end date indicate an active-duty service member. Bricks with one star indicates the service member is still classified by the U.S. Department of Defense as missing in action. Two stars indicate the service member was killed in action. All proceeds go to the foundation.

More than one hundred volunteers placed the bricks along the sidewalks of the memorial grounds. Most volunteers were members of the Run For The Wall Foundation—a veterans service group that supports active-duty service members, while also honoring the memory of those killed in action, and calling for a full accounting of those still missing in action.

The group hosts an annual springtime motorcycle ride that begins in Southern California and ends at the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Memorial Day weekend. The annual bricklaying event at the Angel Fire memorial, which since 2017 has been managed by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), serves as a reunion for the riders.

“As an Army veteran, today is an emotional, very touching day for me,” said DVS Deputy Secretary Bryan Osterhage, who attended the event—his first since being appointed deputy secretary in 2019. “It makes me proud that we (DVS) are able to host the event—and know that veterans are forever honored here at this beautiful place.”

The sentiment was echoed by Zigmund Gadziala, who came down from Castle Rock, CO, with several family members to lay a brick in honor of his brother Gary, a U.S. Army Priv. 1<sup>st</sup> Class who was killed in action in 1968. *(brick shown in right photo)*

“We were all fine, up until we got to the moment of handing over the brick to the volunteers,” said Gadziala. “I miss him every day. But we’re really happy to be here, to see something like this, to honor him like this. It means a lot to me and our extended family, to see this.”



*(continued on next page)*

“It’s real...heartbreaking...really sad,” said an emotional Juliet Dean of Ruidoso. She bought a brick to honor her brother, U.S. Army Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jerome Klein, (*below, upper left photo*) who was killed in action in 1971. “It’s still very emotional for me and my family. I wish my mother could’ve been here to see this.”

Last year’s bricklaying was cancelled due to the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The more than 800 bricks placed this year far surpasses the typical 450-500 bricks placed every year.

For more information about purchasing memorial bricks for next year, please contact the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at (575) 377-2293.





**Sonya L. Smith**  
DVS Cabinet Secretary

## DVS Secretary Smith Participates in Online Women's Equality Day Commemoration Hosted by the NMVAHCS

DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith was invited by New Mexico VA Health Care System (NMVAHDS) Interim Director Jean Gurga to take part in an NMVAHCS online celebration of National Women's Equality Day on August 26.

The focus of the discussion was on two monumental pieces of national legislation that gave women rights that, until passage of these laws, were only enjoyed by men since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The first...the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, passed in June of 1919 and ratified on August 18, 1920--giving women the right to vote. Secretary Smith pointed out, however, that this still did not give all women the right to vote. Many states in the south, she said, still had in place anti-voting discriminatory laws barring women—and people of color—from voting.

“Women were still fighting for their reaffirmed constitutional right to vote,” she said. “It wasn't until 45-years later...not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, that Black Americans, Asians, Native Americans...and all people of color...all women...were finally given the right to vote. Think about it: 1965—that's not too long ago, people.”

Secretary Smith pointed to another example of the fight women continue to fight to gain equal footing with men. The passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, initially proposed in 1923 to guarantee legal gender equality for all men and women.

“Imagine that. Women are still fighting for equality in pay and working conditions—because this amendment still hasn't been ratified,” she said—alluding to the constitutional requirement that three-quarters of states need to vote to ratify an amendment. “New Mexico only approved it in 1973. Virginia—my home state—just did it last year! So we still have this fight on our hands.”

Virginia was the 38th state to ratify the ERA since Congress re-proposed the ERA in 1972, technically qualifying the amendment for full ratification. But the 1972 ratification deadline set by Congress after re-approving the amendment has passed—along with another 1982 deadline, and five states have acted to rescind their prior approval.

“What is it that WE can do? How can we raise our voices?” said Secretary Smith in concluding her remarks. “We have got to stay vigilant with this. We have to let our younger sisters...and our brothers... know about this fight.”

When the 117<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress convened in full earlier this year, the House of Representatives voted 222-204 to pass a bi-partisan sponsored house joint resolution to remove the time limit for the Equal Rights Amendment. It is now in the senate awaiting action. If it passes, legal scholars believe the ERA could potentially be ratified now that the necessary 38 states have already voted to ratify the amendment.

## U.S. Senator Lujan and DVS Deputy Secretary Osterhage Tour ABQ Wellness Facility

DVS Deputy Secretary Bryan Osterhage joined U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.) on September 1 for a tour of the Forward Flag Veterans Wellness Center in Albuquerque.

The visit was to highlight support for veterans during National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, observed nationally every September.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 20 veterans take their life every day. Forward Flag is committed to reducing veteran suicide in New Mexico—striving to raise awareness of these high rates and work with family and friends of the veteran to offer alternatives for them.



**ABOVE PHOTO:** Retired NM National Guard Command Sgt. Major Ted Skibyak, Field Operations Director for Forward Flag (*at right, in tan shirt*), gives a tour of the agency's facility to U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan, (D-NM...*standing in center*) and DVS Deputy Secretary Bryan Osterhage (*at left*)



Forward Flag also offers activities to engage at-risk veterans and their families in various social activities such as service dog training (*below/left photo*), archery (*below/right photo*), leather crafts, game nights, weight training, and fishing. Soon to come are equine therapy and kayaking.

Lujan and Forward Flags to increase awareness throughout the state—as well as helping veterans with filing VA claims ad for state benefit”

“It was an honor and pleasure to meet with Senator Lujan and Forward Flag staff,” said DVS Deputy Secretary Osterhage. “DVS is also committed to raising awareness of veteran suicide and prevention. We look forward to supporting and collaborating with Senator

More information about Forward Flag can be found at <https://forwardflag.org/>.

**RIGHT PHOTO:** DVS Deputy Secretary Bryan Osterhage (*standing at left, wearing black safety mask*) listens as U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan, (D-NM...*holding a folded American flag*) addresses Forward Flag staff gathered next to the agency's outreach vehicle—thanking them for helping veterans seeking mental help assistance.



## DVS Hosts Two Live Facebook Discussions on Veteran Suicide Awareness & Prevention

DVS hosted two online discussions on September 3 as part of its continuing effort to raise awareness and foster collaboration dealing with veteran suicide/

In a morning public Facebook “live” discussion, DVS Healthcare Coordination Division Director Jemia Warner was joined by VA Gallup Vet Center Veterans Program Outreach Specialist Robertson Yazzie, and New Mexico American Legion District 7 Vice Commander David “Doc” Holliday to promote a September 11 “S.A.V.E. Motorcycle Ride” in southern and northern New Mexico.



These multiple-stop, all-day rides provided valuable learning opportunities at each stop about suicide awareness and prevention assistance for veterans and their families here in New Mexico. Much of the discussion was about the value motorcycle rides provide for raising awareness about what many veterans consider a taboo topic.

“When you get guys together in a group, like a group of veterans on motorcycles, they’re more likely to open up and ask honest questions,” said Holliday, who is also a member of the American Legion Riders. “It makes a big difference. You just can’t get this in ‘regular’ settings.”

Yazzie agreed, saying veterans simply feel more comfortable among fellow veterans---especially when it comes to dealing with emotional topics.

“This is peer-to-peer interaction. They’ve all been there...they all know what’s going on,” he said. “It’s like....’This person has gone through what I’ve gone through. They can connect with me on these difficult topics.’”

In an afternoon “Lunch-and-Learn” session among select DVS and New Mexico VA Health Care System staff, Director Warner introduced NMVAHCS Clinical Psychologist Dr. Brenda Mayne, PhD.

Dr. Mayne delved more deeply into the suicide prevention and awareness procedures and programs through the NMVAHCS—through the main Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, and the four Vet Centers (Farmington, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces.

One of the key points she stressed was the importance of an intervention by family and friends of an at-risk veterans. Interventions, she said, don’t have to be a big, dramatic ordeal.

“Simply asking ‘Are you OK?’ is an intervention in itself at its most basic level,” she said. “Studies show that this simple question reduces suicide risk at that moment by 90%..for the next week or so. But this is a big factor—it buys more time to seek the necessary help--but you have to go through with it.”

*(continued on next page)*

She also pointed to the Army's A.C.E. (Ask...Care...and Escort) Suicide Prevention Program that encourages soldiers to directly intervene and honestly question a fellow soldier who exhibits suicidal behavior.

**Ask** the person 'Are you thinking of killing yourself? Ask if they've really thought about this possible action.

**Care**—really listen, and take note of their thoughts...their feelings. Take note of their chaos.

**Escort**—take them to a treatment facility for further assessment, or immediate help.

Dr. Mayne also added it may be necessary for a family member or friend to take such direct action as locking up or hiding known firearms in an at-risk veteran's home—or putting on gun locks, which can be obtained free through law enforcement agencies...or hiding bullets/ammunition. Even hiding the car keys—anything you can do to keep an at-risk veteran safe...from himself or herself, and to keep others safe.

## **Immediate Help for Suicidal and At-Risk Veterans and Their Families:**

### **Veterans Crisis Phone Line**

1-(800) 273-8255

-press "1"

### **New Mexico Crisis and Access Line**

1-(855)-NMCISIS (662-7474)

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-(800) 273-8255

### **Crisis Text Line**

Text HOME to 741-741

## **For Long-Term Help in New Mexico for Suicidal/At-Risk Veterans:**

**Albuquerque Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center**

(505) 265-1711 ext. 5166

[https://www.albuquerque.va.gov/services/Community\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Point\\_of\\_Contact.asp](https://www.albuquerque.va.gov/services/Community_Mental_Health_Point_of_Contact.asp)

## **...Or the Four VA-managed Vet Centers:**

**Farmington (505) 326-4383**

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=490&dnum=All>

**Santa Fe (505) 988-6562**

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=491&dnum=All>

**Albuquerque (505) 346-6562**

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=489&dnum=All>

**Las Cruces (575) 523-9826**

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=5635&dnum=All>

## Active Duty Service Members & Veterans Treated to a Free Day at the State Fair

Veterans and active duty service members, many bringing spouses and family members, enjoyed a day at the New Mexico State Fair on September 14—designated as Military & Veterans Appreciation Day at the State Fair.

Veterans and active-duty service members presenting valid ID were admitted free to the fairgrounds on this annual day presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the New Mexico National Guard, and the New Mexico State Fair, to honor the state's military men and women.



At a mid-morning ceremony on the fairground's main stage, DVS Deputy Secretary Bryan Osterhage thanked the state's military community for their military service for our country.

“As you and your loved ones enjoy the fair today, take a moment to look around...at everyone here---parents, kids, grandparents—enjoying this warm, sunny day,” said Deputy Secretary Osterhage, who is also a major in the U.S. Army Reserve. “I'd like for you to remember this: This fun day has been made possible by one special group of people--the men and women of our military

who have sacrificed to serve and protect us.”

New Mexico Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Ken Nava—the adjutant general of New Mexico—Albuquerque City Council President Cynthia Borrego, and New Mexico VA Health Care System Congressional Liason Joe Baca also honored and thanked current and former service members in separate remarks.

The ceremony concluded with a poignant reading by members of the New Mexico Gold Star Mothers of the names of the 90 service members who've lost their lives while in military service since the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks 20-years ago.



Throughout the day, fairgoers were able visit the more than three dozen military, law enforcement, and veterans/community service agency exhibits and informational tables along the fairground's Main Street and connecting roadways.

## Local Vietnam Veterans Group Seeking Donations to Help Build Angel Fire Replica Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall



The non-profit veterans service organization *Vietnam Veterans of America/Northern New Mexico Chapter 996* is seeking donations to help build a half-scale replica of the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall for the DVS-managed Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

VVA Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 and DVS are working together on the memorial wall project and hope to have it completed next year.



### To Make a Donation

VVA Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 is a congressionally-chartered 501(c)19 nonprofit organization. Donations for the building of the replica wall can be made by going to a special website dedicated by the chapter to help with fundraising for the wall effort:

[www.vietnammemorial.net](http://www.vietnammemorial.net)

Your donations are tax-deductible.

# Veterans Community Bulletin Board

***NOTICE: The following page(s) feature event and informational flyers provided to DVS by veterans and community service agencies. These flyers are published for the convenience of New Mexico's veteran community. Inclusion in The Guardian does not constitute an endorsement by DVS of the organization, content, products, or services contained therein.***

DVS invites service agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers or news releases announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will post these flyers as a public service courtesy to the veteran community. However:

- Flyers must have the name of a point-of-contact from the organization...along with the contact's phone number or email address. Flyers without this information will not be published.
- DVS is not responsible for the accuracy of the content, products, or services in these flyers.
- Views expressed in these flyers are the independent views of the authors/owners of the third-party entity that created the flyer—and does not necessarily reflect the views of DVS.
- To the maximum extent permitted by law, DVS expressly denies liability for any and all losses suffered by any persons or organizations who, in their independent discretion and reliance, either directly or indirectly rely on content, products, services or information offered by these independent third-party organizations.
- DVS reserves the right to edit or decline publishing of any flyer.



## VETERANS JOB FAIR

Face masks required.

Social distancing and COVID-19 health & safety protocols will be observed.

**ALL JOB SEEKERS INVITED**

**BRING YOUR RESUME &  
DRESS FOR SUCCESS!**

**WHEN:** SEPTEMBER 21, 2021  
1:00PM - 3:00PM

**WHERE:** AMERICAN LEIGON POST 49  
11005 CENTRAL AVE. NE  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87123



New Mexico  
**Workforce Connection**  
A Proud Partner of the American Job Center Network



For questions or additional information, contact the New Mexico Workforce Connection at 505-843-1900 or email [NMWorkforceConnection@wccnm.org](mailto:NMWorkforceConnection@wccnm.org).

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Equal opportunity program in which auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

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- \* Franklins Earthmoving
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- \* Hilltop Landscaping
- \* Social Security Admin
- \* MDC
- \* NM Workforce Connection
- \* Santa Ana Star
- \* Goodwill NM
- \* Sandia Hotel & Casino
- \* NM State Police
- \* Service Master Clean
- \* NMDVS
- \* Lowes
- \* TSA
- \* TriCore
- \* ABQ Police Dept.
- \* T-Mobile
- \* Amazon
- \* A better way of Life Inc.
- \* VetSec

### Veterans



## From the New Mexico VA Health Care System...

### WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

*You served, you deserve  
★ the best care anywhere.*



### Join Us for a Women Veterans Health Care Virtual Townhall

**September 23, 2021, from 5 pm to 6 pm.**

Attendees will have to opportunity to learn about some of the Women Veterans Health Care Programs available to them and have their questions answered about these programs.

Presenters will be:

James Goff, MD, Chief of Staff

Janice Kando, MD, Chief of Women's Health Services

Margaret Spencer, MD, Women's Health Physician

Mary E. Johnston, DPT, Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist

Nichole Umbarger, LCSW, Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program Coordinator

Megan Boerding, RD, MOVE Program

Mary T. Jaco, RN, MSN, Maternity Care Coordinator

If you are interested in participating, please contact Mary Jaco at [mary.jaco@va.gov](mailto:mary.jaco@va.gov) or Paula at [paula.aragon@va.gov](mailto:paula.aragon@va.gov). You will be sent to a confirmation reserving your spot. This will be a virtual meeting. A follow-up email will be sent to confirm your participation along with a phone number to call into.

The non-profit agency *Paws & Stripes*, which provides animal-assisted therapy for veterans with PTSD, TBI, and MST, is hosting a veterans benefits open house.

# VETERAN SERVICES OPEN HOUSE



## SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

### 10:00AM - 2:00PM

Open house to offer information and services available to veterans and their family member.

#### Attending Agencies to Serve You

- Veterans Intergration Center
- Paws And Stripes
- Disabled American Veterans
- AFLAC
- Presbyterian Medical Services
- Department of Veteran's Affairs



JOIN US AT  
PAWS AND STRIPES  
617 TRUMAN ST NE, ABQ, N.M. 87110



# Gen Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton Chapter Tuskegee Airmen, Inc

## 13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL Golf Classic

RAFFLE  
BUFFET  
PRIZES  
MULLIGANS

Saturday  
16 Oct 2021  
8:00 AM



Gen Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton Chapter  
Tuskegee Airmen, Inc

# TOPGOLF

Join us for our 13th Annual TAI Golf Tournament hosted by TOP GOLF!  
Proceeds from this tournament will benefit the Chapter Scholarship Fund,  
GEN "Fig" Newton Aviation Camp, and Colonel Alvin Drew Space Camp.



\$80 Per Player  
6 Person Teams



1600 Desert Surf Cir NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87107

Check-In: 7:45 AM  
Shotgun: 8:00AM



## News from the VA



### VA Enhances Geriatric Emergency Care for Older Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched a Geriatric Emergency Department initiative within all of VA's 18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks through a standardized, comprehensive care model, becoming the nation's largest integrated health network with specialized geriatric emergency care.

This initiative equips VA emergency departments with the ability to treat older Veterans with complex conditions, catch unmet care needs and develop teamwork strategies throughout VA to better coordinate ED and follow-up care.

VA has partnered with the American College of Emergency Physicians, The John A. Hartford Foundation and the West Health Institute to ensure elderly veterans continue to be afforded the best possible emergency care and person-centered health services.

The evidence-based approach to caring for older adults includes screenings to identify seniors at risk for cognitive impairment, delirium, fall risk, functional decline, and caregiver burden.

“Nearly half of the nation's 19.5 million veterans are over 65 years old and account for more than 45% of emergency department visits at VA hospitals— more than double the rate for seniors nationwide,” said VA Acting Under Secretary for Health Steven L. Lieberman, M.D. “Our goal is to lower this number by ensuring VA's elderly population receives age-friendly emergency care, while improving care coordination in communities across the nation.”

VA continues to promote and augment transitions of care through an interdisciplinary team approach from various services throughout facilities. This is achieved through connecting with social work and VA home/community resources, geriatric education for emergency department staff and supporting geriatric veterans in the community to prevent avoidable admissions.

The partnership aims to establish 70 VA emergency departments as geriatric EDs eligible for accreditation in alignment with ACEP's GED Accreditation by December 2022. Accreditation includes three levels that each have specific education criteria for clinicians and nurses, creating EDs that are more expertly equipped to treat older Veterans with complex conditions and social needs through interdisciplinary service coordination across a hospital.

Accredited emergency departments have proven to lower costs, reduce the rate of unnecessary hospital admissions, and prevent the risk of inpatient complications. Best practices and lessons learned from this collaboration will be shared with EDs outside the VA. ACEP has accredited more than 200 emergency departments since the program's inception in 2018.

## VA Spotlights Special Benefits for Elderly Wartime Veterans

As a follow up to National Financial Awareness Day on August 14, VA has launched an awareness campaign to inform elderly wartime veterans and their families of their pension, funeral, burial and survivor benefits.

“VA’s pension benefit helps veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income,” said Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy. “Currently, only 189,800 wartime veterans and 139,800 surviving spouses are using their needs-based pension benefits that are meant to ease the burden on them, their families and caregivers. We need to ensure all of our wartime veterans and their survivors are aware of their benefits.”



The following benefits are available through VA’s pension and fiduciary service ([https://benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/docs/VA\\_Fiduciary\\_Guide\\_Apr2020.pdf](https://benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/docs/VA_Fiduciary_Guide_Apr2020.pdf)) for use in planning and preparing for the future.

VA pensions (<https://www.va.gov/pension/>) are payable to wartime veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to non-service connected disability, or who are age 65 years old or older, and who meet certain income and net worth limits.

Special monthly pensions (<https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/EnhancedorSpecialPension.pdf>) are an additional benefit for veterans in receipt of pension who are housebound, require the aid and attendance of another person to help them with daily activities (such as eating, bathing and dressing), have very limited eyesight, or require nursing home care.

For surviving spouses, there are two types of benefits P&F Service offers. A survivors pension (<https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension/>) provides monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits. A special monthly pension is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, or DIC, (<https://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/>) is available to dependents and parents, and generally is not based on income and assets (except the income limits apply to parents). DIC is a monthly monetary benefit paid to a surviving spouse, child or parent of a veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, or when an active-duty service member dies in the line of duty. Special monthly DIC is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person.

A surviving spouse of a veteran who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, may be eligible for DIC benefits — even if they were previously denied.

VA’s funeral and burial benefits (<https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/>) are available for both service-related and non-service-related deaths. New regulations allow a flat-rate burial and plot or interment allowance with decreased paperwork and maximum payment permitted by law.

*(continued on next page)*

For those interested in burial benefits such as a Presidential Memorial Certificate, burial flag, headstone or marker, the National Cemetery Administration ([https://www.cem.va.gov/burial\\_benefits/index.asp](https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/index.asp)) has information about pre-need eligibility.

Many vulnerable senior wartime veterans are targeted with misinformation. In many cases, they are not fully aware of their benefits, which increases the chances of them being taken advantage of and/or defrauded. VA encourages elderly wartime veterans and their family members to consult a VA-accredited representative, such as certified veterans service officers (VSOs) of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, for assistance with filing a claim (see below for DVS VSO contact information.) All veterans are reminded to beware of individuals or companies that promise benefits or ask for money upfront, as only VA can make final determinations on eligibility.

## **DVS Offices Are Open for In-Person Assistance— By Appointment Only**

DVS offices are open for in-person visits for veterans or their eligible dependents to get assistance with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or for anything that a veteran or his/ her family may need help.

DVS has formed partnerships with federal, state, local, and private agencies and organizations all dedicated to helping veterans and their families.

***All DVS office visits are by appointment-only.***

Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Veterans or their eligible dependents **must** make an appointment with a DVS veterans service officer (VSO) via the contact information on the following page.

**DVS VSOs are also continuing to offer the same assistance by email or phone. Veterans from anywhere in the state...can contact any DVS VSO for assistance.**

With the COVID-19 virus and new variants still posing a health threat, DVS is requiring all unvaccinated veterans or their eligible dependents who visit DVS offices to wear a protective facemask. DVS staff will observe COVID-19 six-foot social distancing and will clean & disinfect the office in-between customer visits.

The following page has the locations and contact information for DVS offices and veterans service officers in New Mexico. Also on the list is the contact information for:

- the DVS women veterans program  
—dedicated to helping women veterans
- the DVS state benefits division
- the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)  
—free expert business counseling for veterans wanting to open, expand, or buy a small business business

*(contact information is on next page)*

**Alamogordo VSO****Larry Weatherwax**411 Tenth St. #107  
(575) 491-3127[larry.weatherwax@state.nm.us](mailto:larry.weatherwax@state.nm.us)**Albuquerque VSO (Downtown)****George Vargas**500 Gold Ave. SW  
(575) 520-2634[george.vargas@state.nm.us](mailto:george.vargas@state.nm.us)**Farmington VSO****Beverly Charley**San Juan College Veteran Center  
(505) 327-2861[beverly.charley@state.nm.us](mailto:beverly.charley@state.nm.us)**Grants VSO****George Garcia**515 West High St./Suite C  
(505) 288-7605[george.garcia2@state.nm.us](mailto:george.garcia2@state.nm.us)**Las Vegas, NM VSO****Martín Márquez**917 Douglas Ave.  
(575) 520-5079[martinM.marquez@state.nm.us](mailto:martinM.marquez@state.nm.us)**Roswell VSO****Danielle Thompson**1600 SE Main St./Suite "A"  
(575) 416-2284[danielle.thompson@state.nm.us](mailto:danielle.thompson@state.nm.us)**State Benefits Division****Jeff George**Bataan Memorial Bldg/1st floor  
Santa Fe/407 Galisteo St. Rm 134  
(505) 827-6300[jeff.george@state.nm.us](mailto:jeff.george@state.nm.us)**Albuquerque VSO (NE Heights)****Victoria Bader**5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE  
(505) 225-5253[victoria.bader@state.nm.us](mailto:victoria.bader@state.nm.us)**Carlsbad VSO****Dagmar Youngberg**101 N. Halagueno  
(575) 988-5900[dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us](mailto:dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us)**Gallup VSO****Durrell Tsosie**908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A  
(505) 218-0348[durrell.Tsosie@state.nm.us](mailto:durrell.Tsosie@state.nm.us)**Hobbs VSO****Dalton Boyd**2120 N. Alto  
(575) 241-0714[dalton.boyd2@state.nm.us](mailto:dalton.boyd2@state.nm.us)**Las Vegas, NM VSO****Arturo Marlow**917 Douglas Ave.  
(505) 331-8838[arturo.marlow@state.nm.us](mailto:arturo.marlow@state.nm.us)**Santa Fe VSO**Bataan Memorial Bldg/1st floor  
407 Galisteo St.*(Temporarily vacant. Please contact  
the DVS Rio Rancho office for  
In-person assistance)***Veterans Business Outreach  
Center (VBOC)-Albuquerque****Rich Coffel**5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE  
(505) 220-9932[richardL.coffel@state.nm.us](mailto:richardL.coffel@state.nm.us)**Albuquerque VSO (NE Heights)****Johnny Martinez**5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE  
(505) 274-3609[johnW.martinez2@state.nm.us](mailto:johnW.martinez2@state.nm.us)**Clovis VSO****Matt Barela**904 W. Sixth St.  
(575) 825-9602[matthew.barela@state.nm.us](mailto:matthew.barela@state.nm.us)**Gallup VSO****Benjamin Stewart**908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A  
(575) 386-7911[benjamin.stewart@state.nm.us](mailto:benjamin.stewart@state.nm.us)**Las Cruces VSO***Temporarily vacant. For remote/phone  
assistance, please call (505) 383-2400,  
or email at [nmdvs.info@state.nm.us](mailto:nmdvs.info@state.nm.us)***Rio Rancho VSO****Dustin Newsom***(temporarily offering email or phone  
assistance for now) (505) 221-7190*[dustin.newsom@state.nm.us](mailto:dustin.newsom@state.nm.us)**Women Veterans Program/VSO****Robin Wilson**5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE  
(505) 372-9106[robin.wilson@state.nm.us](mailto:robin.wilson@state.nm.us)