



The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
December, 2021 Edition

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE NEW MEXICO DEPT. OF VETERANS SERVICES!



Holiday Wreaths Placed at Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemetery Gravesites

Holiday wreaths were placed at gravesites at the Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries on December 18 as part of *Wreaths Across America* day nationwide.

The annual day is a coordinated nationwide event to place holiday wreaths at selected gravesites at cemeteries across the country at noon Eastern Standard Time. The wreaths are purchased, through a Maine-based company, by anyone wishing to honor fallen veterans over the holiday season. Volunteers and cemetery staff place the wreaths on the gravesites.

Here in New Mexico, in addition to the three DVS-managed state cemeteries, wreaths were placed at the Santa Fe and Fort Bayard National Cemeteries, and other statewide community cemeteries.





DVS Launches *Operation Holiday Cheer 2021* For Residents & Staff of the State Veterans Home

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is asking New Mexicans to take part in *Operation Holiday Cheer 2021* to bring holiday season's greetings to residents and staff of the New Mexico State Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences.

Launched last year, Operation Holiday Cheer asks people throughout the state to send holiday cards to the home. Many residents have little contact with family—or no family at all. Many staff members work through the holidays, as the home provides year-round, round-the-clock care for residents.

Cards sent to the home will be evenly distributed among residents and staff. The cards need only be addressed with “Dear Veteran” or “Dear Hero,” and contain a short message of appreciation for the veteran’s military service. Cards to staff members can be addressed with, “Dear Frontline Hero,” or other terms of endearment, along with a brief message of appreciation for providing care for the home’s residents.

“The holiday season can be a very lonely, very emotionally painful time of year for many of the residents,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “We just want to be able to bring a little holiday cheer into their lives, and let them know that we appreciate their service for our country—or for caring for the residents-- and that we are thinking of them this holiday season.”

Operation Holiday Cheer was launched by DVS last year—with great success.

“The home received more than 2,000 cards,” she said. “People from outside New Mexico even responded. But as great as that response was, this year....we’d like to double it!”

Cards should be mailed to:
 New Mexico State Veterans Home
 992 South Broadway
 Truth or Consequences, NM 87901
 ATTN: Operation Holiday Cheer



DVS Fills Vacant Healthcare Division Director, Alamogordo VSO Positions

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has filled two key vacant positions that will help the agency continue its mandate of serving the state's 151,000 veterans and their families.

Diane Mourning Brown is the new director of the DVS healthcare coordination division. Her main focus will be to assist and advocate on behalf of veterans and their families with their healthcare related needs. The division develops and coordinates veteran programs and outreach that promote transitional living, housing, suicide prevention, advocacy, and transportation related to healthcare access and issues for New Mexico's veterans.



Diane Mourning Brown
DVS Healthcare
Coordination Division Director

Prior to coming to DVS, Diane was the director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the state agency that assists New Mexicans with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

Prior to this, Diane served as the associate director of the state's Martin Luther King, Jr., Commission. She was appointed to Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Council in June, and served three years on his affordable housing committee.

"Diane has nearly 30-years of experience working in non-profit, public, and social work agencies in New Mexico, Colorado, and northern California," said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. "She has an excellent track record of helping people—so I am excited to welcome her to DVS."

Diane is based in the DVS Albuquerque Northeast Heights office, at 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE. She can be contacted at (505) 318-6273 or diane.mourningbrown@state.nm.us.



David Hensley
DVS Alamoogordo VSO

David J. Henley is the new veterans service officer in the DVS Alamoogordo office.

His primary responsibility will be assisting veterans and their dependents with filing VA claims, state veterans benefits, and assisting with anything else a veteran needs help with. He will also make outreach stops in surrounding communities to help veterans and eligible dependents outside of the Alamoogordo area who prefer in-person assistance.

David comes to DVS from the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, where he assisted veterans for more than 6 years as a local veterans employment representative (LVER), and disabled veterans outreach program (DVOP) specialist facilitating veterans' employment needs.

The Alamoogordo native served 23 years with the United States Air Force as a heavy equipment operator, and air transportation specialist while stationed at Air Force bases in England, South Korea,

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Guam, and the U.S.—including Holloman AFB--before retiring as a master sergeant.

The DVS Alamogordo office is at 411 Tenth Street/Room 107. Appointments are necessary for all in-office visits with David, and can be made by email at david.henley1@state.nm.us or calling (575) 937-5620. All visitors to the office will be required to wear safety face masks. The filling of the Alamogordo VSO vacancy, and last month's filling of the vacant DVS Silver City VSO position, brings the number of DVS VSOs to 18—matching the highest number of VSOs ever staffed by the agency. DVS is currently working to increase the VSO staff to 21 by filling vacancies in Grants and Hobbs, and one in Albuquerque.

“One of my top priorities upon coming to DVS last year was to not only fully staff our VSO division, but to expand it,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “They are critical to what we do. Our veterans service officers are the heart and soul of this agency. They are the ‘boots-on-the-ground’ staff who will work with a veteran to provide assistance with whatever a veteran needs help with.”

DVS VSOs: Providing Assistance to Any Veteran From Anywhere in the State

The 18 DVS veterans service officers are located in communities throughout the state. Though their primary focus is serving veterans and their families in the VSO's community, DVS VSOs can provide phone or email assistance to any veteran in the state. A listing of DVS VSOs, their office addresses, and their phone number and email addresses can be found on the last two pages of this newsletter.

DVS Makes Several December Outreach Visits



DVS has resumed outreach visits to communities throughout the state. These outreaches, which were halted during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, provide an opportunity for veterans in cities or towns that don't have a DVS office to get in-person assistance for their benefits needs.

(Left photo) In Santa Fe, DVS Veterans Service Officer Nick McKenzie *(right photo, in black shirt)* assisted veterans at a veterans benefits outreach fair presented by DVS and the city's Veterans Advisory Board on December 8 at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center. Staff from the Santa Fe National Cemetery, the New Mexico VA Health Care System, the Albuquerque VA Regional Office, the New Mexico Rail Runner, and the Santa Fe Vet Center also offered assistance.

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DVSVSOs also made outreach visits this month to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire, the Sandoval County Government Complex in Bernalillo, and to Artesia at the United Veterans Hall.

Below are the next scheduled outreach visits by DVSVSOs.

Albuquerque (Dec. 28)

Raymond G. Murphy
VA Medical Center Lobby (10am-2pm)
1501 San Pedro Dr. SE

Ruidoso (Jan. 5)

Ruidoso Senior Community Center (10am-3pm)
501 Sudderth Dr.

Angel Fire (Jan. 13)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial (10am-2pm)
34 Country Club Rd.

Los Alamos (Jan. 24)

Los Alamos County Assessor's Office (10am-2pm)
2451 Central Ave. #C

Raton (Jan. 26)

Colfax County Assessor's Office (10am-2pm)
230 North 3rd St.

Los Lunas (Feb. 1)

Valencia County Assessor's Office (10am-2pm)
444 Luna Ave.

More outreaches throughout the state will resume next month. DVS will provide more information as soon as plans are finalized.

For all outreach visits, veterans are encouraged to bring a copy of their DD-214 separation form and any supporting VA documents in order to facilitate on-site claims files that could begin. Veterans can also file for a replacement DD-214 at these outreaches.

Veterans and unmarried widows of veterans can also file for the veterans property tax exemption—a \$4,000 reduction in the taxable value of their primary residence. The exemption can also instead be applied towards a discount off of vehicle registration fees.

Veterans rated by the VA as 100% total and permanent service-connected disabled can apply for a disabled veterans property tax waiver—which waives the entire property tax amount. Unmarried widows of 100% total and permanent service-connected disabled veterans can also apply for the waiver.

DVS Hosts “Lunch & Learn” Online Discussions

DVS co-hosted *Lunch & Learn* online discussions earlier this month featuring the New Mexico Film Office and the New Mexico Veterans Integration Centers.

These monthly discussions provide an opportunity for veterans service and community service organizations to share information with the state’s veteran community about how their programs can help New Mexico’s veterans and their families.

The December 6 discussion with the film office centered on its *Operation Sound Stage*—a program that seeks qualified veterans for the many behind-the-scenes jobs in the state’s booming film and TV production industry. The program offers orientation classes to help with the process. More information can be found at <https://nmfilm.com/operation-soundstage-oss/>.

On December 10, representatives from the New Mexico Veterans Integration Centers discussed how it helps homeless and at-risk veterans. More than just a homeless shelter, “the VIC” is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that is an invaluable resource for veterans and their families providing a multitude of services including multiple housing assistance options, peer support, food and nutrition, and case management services to Veterans, their families and the community. More information can be found at <https://www.nmvic.org/>.

Below are the next scheduled Lunch & Learn discussions which are scheduled for 11am-noon and can be accessed by the following Zoom link: <https://nmdvs-org.zoom.us/j/98103253190>

January 7

City of Albuquerque Veterans Advisory Board

February 4

Building Healthy Military Communities

March 4

New Mexico VA Regional Office

April 1

City of Santa Fe Veterans Advisory Board



If you are a member or work at service agency or organization...and would like to be the focus of an upcoming Lunch & Learn discussion, please contact DVS Event Coordinator Joseph Dorn at (505) 553-9649 or josepM.dorn@state.nm.us.



Veterans Encouraged to Enroll In Free Film Industry PA “Boot Camps”

The New Mexico Film Office (NMFO) has launched a new series of free online production assistant “boot camps” aimed at training New Mexicans for entry-level positions as production assistants in the booming New Mexico film and television industry.

A production assistant, also known as a PA, is an entry-level position within the film crew in the film and television industry. A PA’s role can vary and include a range of delegated tasks including, but not limited to, office work, errands, set up, and clean up. Strong organizational and communication skills are necessary. These free one-day online PA boot camps will prepare New Mexicans to immediately begin a career as a production assistant.

“Working as a production assistant is like a rite of passage and is an excellent way to get to know all the various departments on a film set and figure out what one wants to do--and if this is the career for them,” said NMFO Director Amber Dodson. “New Mexico continues to see a big increase in film productions—and with it, a big demand for production assistants. This boot camp will provide a pipeline for trained entry-level PA positions.”

Military veterans are strongly encouraged to enroll, said DVS Secretary Sonya Smith, because veterans have traits that appeal to the TV and film production industry.

“A film or TV production is like a military operation--with lots of moving parts and a defined chain of command,” said New Mexico Department of Veterans Services Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “Veterans have a discipline and know how to follow orders—traits that are highly valued on a production set.”

Participants in these online boot camps will gain a comprehensive understanding of the basic role of a PA, how to read a call sheet, an understanding of departments and protocols, general terminology, familiarity with equipment, safety training and more.

The New Mexico Film Office has partnered with Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Ingenuity to provide these online PA boot camps, which are taught by Alton Walpole, a filmmaker with over thirty years of filmmaking experience working on films such as *Crazy Heart*, *The Book of Eli*, *Longmire*, *Godless*, and many more productions.

These free one-day PA boot camps will be held via Zoom and will be offered regularly through next April. For a schedule of boot camps: <https://cnmingenuity.org/program/film-industry-training/>

Participants must be New Mexico residents over the age of 18 and interested and available to work immediately. Space is limited and spots will be filled on a first-come-first-serve basis. To register: <https://cnmingenuity.org/program/film-industry-training/>

2022 Military & Veterans Day at the Legislature Cancelled

Military & Veterans Day at the Legislature has been cancelled for the 2022 New Mexico Legislature—as have all public recognitions days and rotunda events—due to public safety concerns relating to the ongoing COVID pandemic.



The session is open to the public, but attendees must provide proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 unless the individual qualifies for an exemption. An individual will be considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines...or two weeks after a single-dose Johnson & Johnson Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.

An individual who claims to be fully vaccinated but cannot provide proof will be advised to use their personal electronic device to access www.vaxviewnm.org to obtain a record of their vaccination record before entry is permitted into the Capitol.

An individual may be exempt from the vaccination proof requirement if they have a qualifying medical condition, disability-related condition, or a sincerely held religious belief...and provides proof of a negative COVID-19 test within the previous 48 hours. To be eligible for an exemption due to:

- a qualifying medical condition, the individual must provide a statement from a physician, nurse practitioner or other medical professional licensed to practice in New Mexico stating that the individual qualifies for the exemption and indicating the probable duration of the individual's inability to receive the vaccination;
- a disability, the individual must provide documentation from a physician, nurse practitioner or other medical professional licensed in New Mexico stating that the individual has a disability that necessitates an accommodation and the probable duration of the need for the accommodation.
- a sincerely held religious belief, the individual must provide a statement regarding the manner in which the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine conflicts with the religious observance, practice or belief of the individual.

If the screening process determines that an individual has met the requirements for an exemption, the unvaccinated individual shall provide adequate proof that the individual has tested negative for COVID-19 within 48 hours prior to entering the State Capitol.

Additional Safeguards

- Masks will be required and must be worn at all times, except while eating.
- The bottom floor will be limited to legislators and legislative staff.
- Media and public galleries will be open for the media and the public, respectively.
- Please wash your hands and use hand sanitizer
- Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not enter the building.



**Col. Tim Hale
(USAF/Ret.)**
DVS Cabinet Secretary
(2011-2014)

Former DVS Cabinet Secretary Tim Hale Inducted Into the Air Commando Hall of Fame

Former DVS Cabinet Secretary Tim Hale has been inducted into the Air Commando Hall of Fame. The retired United States Air Force colonel—who served as DVS cabinet secretary from January, 2011 to November, 2014—was honored by the Air Commando Association for, according to the award’s citation, having “distinguished himself as an air commando, veteran’s advocate, civilian instructor, an minister over four decades of service to God, his nation, and his fellow Americans.”

Colonel Hale was a C-130 special operations pilot whose 28-years of service spanned from his first combat mission in 1983 as part of Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada...to flying numerous combat and supply missions in support of Operation Iraq Freedom. The citation also acknowledges recovery missions he flew in 2004 following Hurricane Ivan’s path of destruction through our nation’s Gulf Coast, and his work as an ordained minister focusing on helping veterans and their families following his stint as DVS cabinet secretary. Colonel Hale and his wife Jennifer are now enjoying retirement in Oklahoma.

New Mexico Adjutant General Ken Nava Retires

Maj. Gen. Kenneth Nava, the 44th Adjutant General of New Mexico, relinquished command of the New Mexico National Guard to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham at a December 3 ceremony at the New Mexico Military Complex parade field in Santa Fe (*right photo*).



Maj. Gen. Nava’s 33-year career in the Army National Guard began in the enlisted ranks culminating with his appointment in 2017 as the adjutant general—the state’s highest ranking military officer in charge of the Army and Air National Guard. Under his leadership, the Guard expanded the number of “readiness” centers, built a new aviation center in Las Cruces, and expanded the Guard’s Youth Challenge Program. He also led the Guard’s efforts to assist with the state’s COVID-19 vaccine program—helping to establish more than 200 vaccine testing sites and distribution sites throughout the state.

“General Nava has been a standout leader throughout my time in office, and was integral in mobilizing our national guard to support and protect New Mexicans throughout the pandemic,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “I thank him for his many years of service to our state and our country and I wish him the very best in his future endeavors.”

Deputy Adjutant General Miguel Aguilar has assumed command of the Guard until the governor appoints a permanent adjutant general. Maj. Gen. Nava, meanwhile, has accepted a management position in the technology sector.

WWII “Tuskegee Airman” Honored at His Las Cruces Home

World War II veteran and former Tuskegee Airman James Clayton Flowers was treated to a “drive by” 105th birthday caravan to his Las Cruces home on December 4.

Health concerns regarding the ongoing COVID pandemic resulted in the planning of a caravan instead of a party or other gathering.



Flowers birthday is actually on Christmas, but the caravan was organized by the El Paso Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club to accommodate participants who would've been out of town on and around December 25.

The Tuskegee Airmen were an African American group of airmen that provided escorts for American heavy bombers on bombing missions over Europe and North Africa.

Prior to 1939, U.S. Army Air Corps policy excluded African Americans from flying or serving in aviation support positions. But as the result of a challenge by the NAACP, the USAAC created a program to train African American pilots, bombardiers, navigators and maintenance/ground crews. The men received this training at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.

After his military service, Flowers taught in the New York City public schools system before retiring and moving to Las Cruces in 1984 with his wife Evelyn, who was also a former teacher. She passed away in 2008. Flowers is one of the oldest of about 20 survivors of enrollees in the Tuskegee program.





COVID Vaccine and Booster Update

The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) announced the state's first identified case of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. The case was identified on Sunday, December 12, in a female adult in Bernalillo County. The individual recently visited a state with reported cases of the Omicron variant. The individual was treated at a local emergency room and discharged.

Omicron has been identified as a variant of concern by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC describes a variant of concern as “a variant for which there is evidence of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease (for example, increased hospitalizations or deaths), significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.”

The Omicron variant has been confirmed in 30 states and the District of Columbia, as well as more than 60 countries. Omicron appears to be spreading faster than the currently-dominant Delta variant.

DOH reminds New Mexicans that the best way to protect themselves and their loved ones continues to be vaccination. Everyone age 5 and over is eligible for vaccine, and everyone 16+ is eligible for a booster shot. New Mexicans can register for vaccine appointments at <https://goodtimes.vaccinenm.org/stay-ahead-nm/>. Vaccines are provided at no cost, and neither insurance nor ID is required.

In addition, DOH encourages New Mexicans to continue proven public safety practices, including masking, avoiding crowds, and washing hands frequently.

Boosters Now Available for 16 & 17 year olds: COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine booster scheduling is now available for 16-17 year-olds. Parents and guardians can also register and schedule their children for vaccine boosters at <https://goodtimes.vaccinenm.org/stay-ahead-nm/>. Additional instructions are available at <https://goodtimes.vaccinenm.org/dependents/>

75% of New Mexicans 18+ have completed their initial COVID-19 vaccination series
DOH reports that 75% of New Mexicans 18 years and older have completed their initial COVID-19 vaccination series, meaning they have either received one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or two doses of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.

More than 40,000 New Mexicans aged 5-11 have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine

DOH also reports over 40,000 New Mexicans between the ages 5-11 have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This figure represents more than 21% of all New Mexicans within this age range. Moreover, nearly 15,000 of New Mexico's 5-11 year-olds have now completed their initial vaccination series.

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 submitted flyer.

Women Veterans and Spouses of Veterans Encouraged to Attend a Special Entrepreneurship Conference in Phoenix

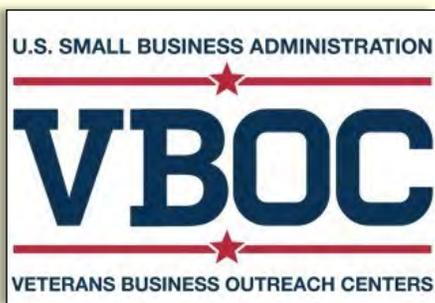
Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families is scheduled to host a *Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship* (V-WISE) conference in Phoenix, AZ, on Jan. 28-30, 2022.

Women veterans or spouses of veterans who've ever thought of owning a business is strongly encouraged to attend.

V-WISE is a premier training program in entrepreneurship and small business management. V-WISE helps women veterans and female military spouses/partners find their passion and learn the business savvy skills necessary to turn an idea or start-up into a growing venture. V-WISE is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the generous philanthropic support of corporate and foundation partners nationwide.

More information can be found on the next page.

The New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center: Local Help for Entrepreneurial-Minded Veterans, Transitioning Active Service Members, and Their Spouses



Here in New Mexico, the New Mexico Veteran's Business Outreach Center (VBOC)—the business development division of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS)—offers local assistance for entrepreneurial-minded veterans, transitioning active service members, and their spouses.

The VBOC was created in 2010 through an ongoing grant by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as the first state-managed program to help entrepreneurial-minded members of the veteran community. New Mexico's VBOC can help with everything from business planning, start-up and expansion funding, marketing, franchising, purchasing of a business--and anything else a small business needs to launch and grow.

The VBOC is based in Albuquerque, in the DVS Northeast Heights office at 5201 Eagle Rock Ave. NE. In addition to providing assistance to New Mexico's veteran and military community, the VBOC also assists Colorado's entrepreneurial-minded veteran community.

For more information, contact VBOC Director Rich Coffel at richardL.coffel@state.nm.us or (505) 220-9932.



TOPICS ADDRESSED

- ▶ ACCOUNTING
- ▶ ECONOMICS
- ▶ FINANCING
- ▶ LEGAL ISSUES
- ▶ MARKETING
- ▶ BUSINESS PLANS
- ▶ HUMAN RESOURCES
- ▶ IDEA RECOGNITION
- ▶ OPERATIONS
- ▶ PROFIT MODELS

PROGRAM METRICS & OUTCOMES*



3,000+ GRADUATES BOLD ENOUGH TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

65% OF V-WISE GRADUATES HAVE STARTED/CONTINUED TO GROW THEIR OWN BUSINESS

93% OF THOSE ARE STILL IN OPERATION TODAY!



\$78 MILLION+ (AND GROWING!)
ANNUAL AVERAGE REVENUE REPORTED BY VWISE GRADUATES**

* All data based on Annual Entrepreneurship Alumni Impact Survey results 2016-2018.
** 3-year rolling average (2015-2017, of those who responded to annual survey from 2016-2018)

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF)

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation's military, veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. ARSENAL is the IVMF's entrepreneurship portfolio that includes V-Wise—Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship—providing women veterans, active duty and female military spouses with the no-cost training they need to either start a new business or grow an existing one. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the post-service lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families.

The V-WISE experience consists of three phases of training and ongoing support:



- ▶ **Phase 1:** This **15-day online learning experience** is designed to teach participants the "language of business," instruct students how to understand opportunity recognition as it relates to growing a sustainable venture, and present actionable strategies related to new venture creation.
- ▶ **Phase 2:** The conference phase of the V-WISE experience, is a **three-day training** offered to cohorts of 200 women at locations across the country. The conference includes more than 20 distinct modules of training, designed for both new business owners and to support the needs of existing ventures. Delegates are exposed to successful entrepreneurs, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and leaders in government. Upon completion of this phase, participants will receive 2.7 continuing education units from Syracuse University (documentation is required).
- ▶ **Phase 3:** Following the conference, graduates are connected to **ongoing support** and community-building opportunities focused on small business creation and growth. This resource network includes both SBA-provided supportive services, including Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), Women's Business Centers (WBCs), Veterans' Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs), Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) offices, as well as services provided by the IVMF and other IVMF partners.

ELIGIBILITY

V-WISE is open to all honorably discharged female veterans, active duty female service members and female partners/spouses of active service members and veterans who share the goal of launching and growing a sustainable business venture. Participants may be from any branch of the military and any era of service.

COSTS & LOGISTICS

The program is offered to qualified participants for a one-time \$75 registration fee. Participants are responsible for their transportation costs to and from the on-site conference location. The cost of the program, meals, and lodging during the conference are funded by the SBA and the IVMF's private-sector partners.

APPLY

We operate on a rolling admissions basis, therefore early application is highly encouraged. Apply online at: vwise.vets.syr.edu/apply

QUESTIONS

(315) 443-6898 ivmfeducation@syr.edu

A program of

★ INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES/Syracuse University



Opportunity to Support Fellow Veterans



Veterans and their family members are invited to participate in a national mental health awareness campaign.

The **Make the Connection** team is conducting interviews with Veterans who want to share their stories about seeking mental health treatment and overcoming their challenges.

Interested Veterans must email outreach@maketheconnection.net or call 910-381-3355 with the following:

- Name and age
- Military service affiliation and service dates
- Discharge status (as listed on the DD214)

Veterans will receive compensation for their participation.

WHO:

Veterans of any age or branch of service — including National Guard and Reserve and their family members.

WHAT:

Professionally videotaped interview about experiences with mental health treatment and recovery.

WHEN:

February 17 – February 20, 2022

WHERE:

Albuquerque, New Mexico area. Exact location provided upon confirmation of participation.

MAKE THE CONNECTION



News from the VA



VA Launches Evaluation Pilot Model to Determine Potential Environmental Hazard Exposures

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is piloting a comprehensive military exposure model to consider possible relationships of in-service environmental hazards to medical conditions.

The goal of this new model is to lower the burden of proof for veterans impacted by exposures and speed up the delivery of health care and benefits they need.

The new model will continue to leverage scientific findings from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine available and relevant scientific research data, surveillance of veterans' health outcomes, and adding the review of VA claims data and military environmental research for trends and identify new concerns.

At the direction of the president, the first conditions the pilot will consider are rare respiratory cancers and constrictive bronchiolitis. VA anticipates answers on these conditions by mid-2022.

“We are seeking more information from veterans, more evidence from more sources, and looking to take every avenue possible to determine where a potential presumptive illness based on military service location may exist in a more expedient and holistic manner,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We want all veterans who may have been impacted to file a claim even if it was previously denied.”



The presumptive decision model pilot will run from Nov. 15 to April 1, 2022. VA will look to use the results of the pilot to formalize the model after April 1, 2022. Over the last six months, VA has extended benefits and services to Veterans impacted by military exposures due to Agent Orange (<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5675>) and particulate matter (<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5699>)



Smoking Rates Trending Down For Veterans Receiving VA Health Care

VA is encouraging veterans to talk to their health care providers about smoking cessation programs to help them quit, as cigarette use continues to decline nationwide.

The 2020 Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Use of Health Care Data Findings Report, published

in March 2021, found that the rate of veterans enrolled in VA health care who identified as smokers dropped nearly 20% in 21 years, from 33% in 1999 to 13.3% in 2020.

By comparison, the smoking rate among enrolled veterans is slightly lower than the rate of smokers in the U.S. general population, which is currently 14.2%.

“Quitting smoking isn’t easy, but don’t quit trying — the benefits of quitting include reducing stress and cancer risks, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, and improving one’s overall mental health,” said National Mental Health Director for Tobacco and Health Kim Hamlett-Berry, Ph.D. “While rates of smoking have steadily declined, most people make several attempts to quit. Research has found that combining treatments, such as counseling and prescription medication, increases Veterans’ chances of stopping smoking for good.”

In addition to VA’s wide range of tobacco use treatment options, VA provides many other services designed to help Veterans stop smoking, like nicotine-replacement products, gum and patches, and supportive resources, such as:

QuitVET: (<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/quit-vet.asp>)

Veterans can also call 1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838) to receive tobacco cessation counseling from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., ET Monday through Friday. Counseling is available in English and Spanish.

SmokefreeVET: (<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/smokefreevet.asp>)

For tools and tips to quit smoking, Veterans can sign up for SmokefreeVET by texting VET to 47848. This service is also available in Spanish. Counseling support and all FDA-approved smoking cessation medications are available for eligible veterans seeking assistance with quitting smoking.

VA, IHS Broaden Scope of Service For American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) have renewed a partnership to help our nation's nearly 145,000 American Indian and Alaska Native veterans overcome health care access barriers.



The partnership, originally established in 2003, facilitates health care access and improves patient experience, information technology, resource sharing and will now open the door for these agencies to develop an operational plan to achieve four goals and objectives agreed upon with Tribal stakeholders

“VA and IHS leadership engaged key tribal stakeholders during 90-day tribal consultation sessions in late 2020 and early 2021 to gain insight and feedback on how both agencies can better serve these historically marginalized patient populations,” said Executive Director of Veterans Health Administration’s Office of Rural Health Thomas F. Klobucar, Ph. D. “Through these collaborative efforts, we will continue to bridge existing gaps and provide equitable care delivery to American Indian and Alaska Native veterans, and ensure they receive the high-quality care they have earned.”

The four mutual goals of this partnership are to:

- Increase access and improve quality of health care and services for the benefit of eligible AI/AN patients served by VHA and IHS.
- Facilitate enrollment and seamless navigation for eligible AI/AN Veterans in VHA and IHS health care systems.
- Facilitate the integration of electronic health records and other Health Information Technology systems that affect the health care of AI/AN Veterans.
- Improve access for patient populations through resource sharing, including technology, providers, training, human resources, services, facilities, communication and reimbursement.

For more information about the VHA-IHS partnership and AI/AN Veterans, please contact the VHA Office of Rural Health at ORHcomms@va.gov or IHS at newsroom@ihs.gov.



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 assistance is provided on an appointment-only basis. 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 face mask.

Below and on the following page is the contact information and office locations for DVS veterans service officers and their offices.

Also on the list is the contact information for:

- the DVS Women Veterans Program—a division of DVS that focuses solely on women veterans
- the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center to help entrepreneurial-minded veterans and their spouses
- the DVS-managed Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries.

Alamogordo

David Henley

411 10th Street #107

(575) 937-5620

david.henley1@state.nm.us

Albuquerque (Downtown)

George Vargas

500 Gold Ave. SW

(575) 520-2634

george.vargas@state.nm.us

Albuquerque (Downtown)

Temporarily vacant. Please contact Albuquerque VSO I George Vargas for assistance.

Albuquerque (NE Heights)

Johnny Martinez

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 274-3609

johnW.martinez2@state.nm.us

Albuquerque NE Heights)

Jesus Palomino

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 681-6998

jesus.palomino1@state.nm.us

Carlsbad

Dagmar Youngberg

101 N. Halagueno

(575) 988-5900

dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us

(continued on next page)

Clovis**Matt Barela**

904 W. Sixth St.
(575) 825-9602

matthew.barea@state.nm.us

Gallup**Benjamin Stewart**

908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A
(575) 386-7911

benjamin.stewart@state.nm.us

Las Cruces**Rosa Bycenski**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782

rosa.bycenski@state.nm.us

Las Vegas, NM**Martín Márquez**

917 Douglas Ave.
(575) 520-5079

martinM.marquez@state.nm.us

Roswell**Danielle Thompson**

1600 SE Main St./Suite "A"
(575) 416-2284

danielle.thompson@state.nm.us

Women Veterans Program**Robin Wilson (Program Mgr.)**

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE
(Albuquerque)
(505) 372-9106

robin.wilson@state.nm.us

Gallup State Veterans Cemetery**Gilbert Lopez (Supervisor)**

333 National Cemetery Dr.
(505) 905-9771

gilbert.lopez@state.nm.us

Farmington**Beverly Charley**

San Juan College Veterans Center
(505) 327-2861

beverly.charley@state.nm.us

Grants

Temporarily vacant. For assistance, contact the DVS Gallup office, or call (505) 383-2400

Las Cruces**Miguel Martinez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(575) 644-6869

miguel.martinez1@state.nm.us

Las Vegas, NM**Arturo Marlow**

917 Douglas Ave.
(505) 331-8838

arturo.marlow@state.nm.us

Santa Fe**Nick McKenzie**

Bataan Memorial Bldg/1st floor
407 Galisteo St./Room 134
(505) 218-3125

nicholas.mckenzie1@state.nm.us

Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)**Rich Coffel (Director)**

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE
(Albuquerque)
(505) 220-9932

richardL.coffel@state.nm.us

Ft. Stanton State Veterans Cemetery**Stephen McConnell (Supervisor)**

1398 State Highway 220
(505) 383-4381

stephen.mcconnell@state.nm.us

Gallup**Durrell Tsoie**

908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A
(505) 218-0348

durrell.tsoie@state.nm.us

Hobbs

Temporarily vacant. For assistance, contact the DVS Carlsbad or Roswell offices...or call (505) 383-2400

Las Cruces**Vincent Tellez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 571-7575

vincent.tellez@state.nm.us

Rio Rancho**Dustin Newsom**

1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D, Room 2041
(505) 221-7190

dustin.newsom@state.nm.us

Silver City**Chris Teran**

Western NM University
Juan Chacon Bldg./Room 138-A
1000 West College Ave.
(575) 313-5627

christopher.teran@state.nm.us

Angel Fire**State Veterans Cemetery****Randy Myklebust (Supervisor)**

34 Country Club Rd.
(505) 225-4341

randal.myklebust@state.nm.us