



The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Dept. of Veterans Services
July, 2022

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Senate Kills VA Plan to Close CBOCs Nationwide

New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith is praising the bipartisan decision of twelve U.S. Senators to not support a plan by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to close more than 30 VA medical centers, and 172 clinics across the country—including five here in New Mexico.

The formal voice of non-support on June 27 has effectively killed the plan by halting confirmation hearings, before they even started, for nominees to serve on VA's nine-member Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission.



The commission, formed by passage of the 2018 MISSION Act, is supposed to review VA's recommendations released back in March for closing VA facilities nationwide as part of an overall consolidation and modernization of health care for veterans. On this list were VA community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in Raton, Las Vegas (NM), Gallup, and Española. The plan also called for closing the PTSD treatment facility at the Albuquerque Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center and shifting care to a yet-to-be-built facility in the Phoenix, Arizona metro area.

“This is great news for veterans here in New Mexico—especially those in the communities where the clinics were targeted for closure,” said an ecstatic Secretary Smith, who led a DVS effort to educate veterans here in New Mexico about the VA proposal--and rally local support to prevent the closures. “The proposal unfairly targeted veterans in rural communities in the name of improving health care for veterans living in larger urban areas—but let us also understand there is still work to be done. The system is still not working that’s why we encouraged the veteran community to offer solutions for improvement...the first word in CBOC is ‘Community’ so they must be part of the continued conversation.”

The group of twelve U.S. senators included New Mexico democrats Ben Ray Lujan and Martin Heinrich. In a June 27 statement, the twelve senators issued a joint statement explaining their decisions.

“As senators, we share a commitment to expanding and strengthening modern VA infrastructure in a way that upholds our obligations to America’s veterans,” according to the statement released to the media.”

(continued on next page)

“We believe the recommendations put forth to the AIR Commission are not reflective of that goal, and would put veterans in both rural and urban areas at a disadvantage, which is why we are announcing that this process does not have our support and will not move forward,” the senators said.

The following senators joined the statement rejecting the AIR Commission process:

- Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.)
- Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.)
- Jon Tester (D-Mont.)
- Joe Manchin (D-W.V.)
- Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.)
- Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)
- Patty Murray (D-Wash.)
- Mike Rounds (R-S.D.)
- Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.V.)
- John Thune (R-S.D.)
- Steve Daines (R-Mont.)
- Rob Portman (R-Ohio)

“I would like to thank the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services and Secretary Sonya Smith for their role in working with my office to fight against the proposed closure of our CBOCs,” said Senator Lujan. “Secretary Smith has played an intricate role in working directly with concerned Veterans. And since March when the Department of Veterans Affairs released its recommendations for veteran clinic closures to today, I’ve been vocal that closing facilities will adversely affect the care our veterans receive and the family members that care for them. That’s why I was proud to join a bipartisan group of Senators to announce that we will not be moving forward with the Air Commission process, which would have reviewed the VA’s recommendations. This effectively abolishes the Commission and ends this conversation on clinic closures. Our nation’s veterans deserve the highest-level of care.”

Last year President Joe Biden submitted a list of nominees to serve on the AIR Commission. But the Senate had yet to act on any of those nominees. Once confirmed, commission members are supposed to review VA’s recommendations, visit all of the sites, and issue the commission’s final recommendations to the White House.

The President has until Feb. 15, 2023, to approve the AIR Commission’s final recommendations. If he doesn’t submit his approval to Congress before March 30, 2023, the commission will not be established, and any plans to close the facilities will not move forward.

If the AIR Commission process doesn’t move forward, the MISSION Act still requires VA to conduct four-year reviews of its real-estate needs in each of its regional health care markets. VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the VA could be on the verge of starting the next quadrennial review soon.



DVS Hosts Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery Update/Briefing

DVS hosted a briefing on July 21 in Carlsbad at American Legion Bryan Mudgett-TJ Treviño Post 7 to give an update on the status of the Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery.

DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith (*left photo, standing*) told the crowd that plans are moving forward for construction of the ten acre, \$6 million project that,

when completed, will have 435 in-ground crypts for caskets and urns.

“I understand there have been some starts and stops and other bureaucratic delays with this process,” she said, in reference to talk of building such a cemetery dating back at least two decades. “But I thank you for your patience. DVS is finally moving forward with this cemetery.”

The cemetery will be built on land just north of the existing Sunset Memorial Gardens cemetery. The project has moved up on VA’s National Cemetery Association’s (NCA) project list, and should receive funding once the federal budget is finalized and released on October 1.

“The paperwork is in. NCA should have about \$50 million set aside for state cemetery projects--and we should be high up, probably fifth on that list,” said DVS Cemetery & Monuments Program Bureau Chief Dave Walker. “(*right photo*) In the past we’ve always been in the high-40’s and then in the 20’s. But the project has now been approved, so everything looks good.”

State Benefits Division Director Edward Mendez talked about the projected timeline of the project.

“Once we get the funding, an architectural and engineering survey will be done at the site,” he said. “We hope to have shovels in the ground at this time next year. It all depends on the ground, topography, how everything looks like. But the bottom line is, we’re ready to go.”

He said it should take about 18-months to finish, and that it will be an economic boost for the area because local subcontractors will be needed. The cemetery will employ three full-time staff, with the possibility of a fourth staff position added.





DVS State Benefits Division Director Edward Mendez stands in front of site maps of the future Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery.

This will be the fourth state veterans cemetery managed by DVS. The other three are in Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup. These cemeteries are built to the same construction and landscaping standards set by VA for its national cemeteries.

“We’re very glad to see the state moving forward in providing this service to our veterans and their families. Many members of the Carlsbad community have been advocating for this project for a long time,” said Mayor Dale Janway afterwards. “We especially wish to thank Dagmar Youngberg, Adon Rodriguez and all current and former members of our cemetery board. A great deal of hard work has gone into this project and similar efforts on a local level.”



MIDDLE RIGHT PHOTO: DVS State Benefits Division Director Edward Mendez (*third from right*), DVS Cemeteries & Monuments Program Bureau Chief Dave Walker (*2nd from right, in red shirt*) and DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith meet with a group of veterans as they check out the site of the future Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery.



MIDDLE LEFT/LOWER LEFT PHOTOS: The ten acre site of the future Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery is on the north side of the Sunset Gardens Cemetery at 1408 East Wood Avenue. The state cemetery—like the DVS-managed Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries, will be built and maintained according to VA’s national cemetery standards—with full grass and surrounding landscaping, and upright headstones.

State Land Office to Hold Public Meeting Regarding Land for Proposed Rio Rancho National Cemetery

The New Mexico State Land Office is hosting a public meeting on August 2 in Rio Rancho to provide information and take public comments regarding a VA proposal to buy 340 acres of state trust land and build a national cemetery on the northwest edge of the city.

The meeting is from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Rio Rancho City Hall, at 3200 Civic Center Circle NE. The meeting can also be [accessed online](#).

VA is looking for a solution to deal with projections that the Santa Fe National Cemetery (*right photo*) will reach full capacity for casket and in-ground cremains burials by 2030...and capacity for columbarium wall niches by 2035. VA will be required to bid in a public auction, one that could feature other entities looking to also buy the land. The public bidding could take place this fall.



Volunteers Needed for Next Cleanup at the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery

DVS and the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery are looking for volunteers to help with the next cleanup of the cemetery grounds on Saturday, August 6, from 9am-noon.

The cemetery is located just north of the Yale Blvd. SE/Caesar Chavez Blvd. SE intersection. DVS has joined a volunteer effort to restore the 17.5-acre cemetery, which has been maintained by a volunteer nonprofit organization since closing for burials in 2012.

Nearly 500 veterans—from as far back as the Civil War—are buried in gravesites that, along with the rest of cemetery's 12,000 plots, have eroded to the point of needing major repairs. Volunteers are encouraged to bring shovels/rakes/hoes, weed whackers, wheelbarrows, water, a hat, sturdy work gloves, sunglasses or goggles/protective eyewear, and sun-screen. Pickup trucks and towed utility trailers would also be appreciated.

For more information, please contact Gail Rubin at (505) 363-7514.



DVS Cabinet Secretary Smith Honored By Air Force Security Forces Association

DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith was honored at a July 19 chapter meeting of the Air Force Security Forces Association/Pete Magwood Chapter 1 at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque.



Chapter Chairman Dave Coulie presented Secretary Smith with its 377th Fallen Heroes Coin in recognition of her work on behalf of New Mexico's veterans and their families (*right photo*). In particular, he thanked her for the work of DVS in keeping alive a years-long effort to get legislation passed providing a tax exemption on military retiree pension income. Mr. Coulie has also been active over the past decade in rallying support in the veteran community. State legislators finally passed a military pension tax exemption law in the 2022 Legislature earlier this year. Secretary Smith was also lauded for educating veterans about the possibility of VA closing five of its health care facilities here in New Mexico (*story on front page of this newsletter*)



DVS Takes Part in Online Senior Veterans Forum

DVS Healthcare Coordination Division Director Diane Mourning Brown participated in a senior veterans online public forum hosted by the New Mexico Aging and Long Term Services Department (ALSTD) on July 27.

She was joined by ALTSD Secretary Katrina Holtrum-Lopez, who served as moderator, AARP New Mexico Associate State

Director for Community Outreach Gary Brown, New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department Stephanie Schardin Clarke, and Alzheimer's Association of New Mexico Public Policy Director Tommy Hernandez. Each representative outlined how its agency helped New Mexico's older veterans.

Director Mourning Brown outlined DVS' commitment to helping veterans file for state and VA benefits—especially those that help address homelessness, PTSD/behavioral health counseling, small business help, and what she said is an issue especially important to rural-area veterans: transportation to and from their health care appointments. DVS, she said, is moving to develop a plan offering free round trip rides to and from a veteran's home and VA medical appointments to veterans in counties not eligible to be served by its Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program. That program is paid by a VA grant—and VA, she said, has deemed only 15 counties in New Mexico as “highly rural.”

“We all know New Mexico is mostly rural as a whole,” she said. “Other ineligible counties are also very rural, and we will be working to develop a plan to serve these veterans in need.”

Veterans needing help accessing any of their VA health care benefits can contact Diane at diane.mourningbrown@state.nm.us, or (505) 318-6273.



DVS Holds Quarterly Native American Veterans Briefing

The latest quarterly DVS Native American Veterans Briefing was hosted by the Pueblo of Zuni on July 14 at its Wellness Center.

In addition to providing updates on agency and veterans news, DVS Pueblo and Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley invites Native American leaders and service organization representatives to provide updates from their community or group.

Attending a briefing for the first time were representatives from Honor Flight of Northern New Mexico, the state's chapter of the national non-profit Honor Flight Network that provides free all-expenses-paid two-day visits to Washington D.C. for older veterans to visit the national war monuments. Chapter President Adeline Herrera and Director of Operations Brandy Smotts urged attendees to spread the word about its annual early summer flights from Albuquerque.

"This is a great opportunity for older veterans to visit monuments dedicated to their war service," said Herrera, of the flights which started in 2014. "But very few Native American veterans have made this flight. The flight, hotels, meals—everything is free. If you know a veteran, please have them contact us."

For more information, go to <https://www.honorflightnorthernnm.org/> or call (505) 835-1993.

DVS Provides Veterans Benefits Outreach at Laguna Pueblo Senior Fair on July 15



DVS Gallap-based Veterans Service Officer John Livingston (*left photo/at left; right photo/at right*) answered questions and gave out information about veterans benefits at a July 15 outdoor benefits fair in Paraje, a community within Laguna Pueblo. A good portion of John's workload is spent on the road doing benefits outreaches throughout western New Mexico.



Construction Set to Begin for a New State Veterans Home

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (*left photo, third from right*) helped break ground on July 26 for new residences at the New Mexico State Veterans' Home in Truth or Consequences. The updated residences will consist of six new homes that will include 12 private suites where each resident will have a private room with a bedroom, personal living area, a fully accessible bathroom, living rooms, kitchens, dining rooms, and other common indoor and outdoor spaces. The first three

new homes will be completed in fall of 2023, which will allow all residents currently living in the main building to relocate. The other three homes will be finished in early 2024.

The home is managed by the New Mexico Department of Health. The main building was built in 1936 and has not been updated since the 1980s. It has experienced maintenance issues for many years, including an outdated and inadequate hospital corridor model, undersized resident rooms, inadequate ventilation, and non-ADA compliant restrooms.

"This is great news for New Mexico's veterans and their families," said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. "Veterans who require long-term care deserve a modern and comfortable place to live out their lives. We look forward to assisting residents in this new facility."

DVS provides benefits assistance for residents of the home. It also spearheads the popular *Operation Holiday Cheer* mobilizing the public to send Christmas holiday season cards to residents and staff.

New Mexico Military Museum Now Featuring Unique D-Day Exhibit

The New Mexico Military Museum has added a new exhibit, *In The Presence of Heroes*, by David Scheinbaum, the former director/chair of the photography department and the Marion Center for Photographic Arts at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design, and former professor emeritus at the College of Santa Fe.



The archive contains Scheinbaum's work and documentation during his journey to the 50th Anniversary of D-day in 1994--accompanying his parents to La-Haye-du-Puits, France, a town that his father Louis helped to liberate during WW2. Through written essays and photographs, David Scheinbaum documents his journey to the beachheads and towns of Normandy, where he discovered the gratitude and reverence for Allied liberators are still so powerfully held in the hearts of the children and grandchildren of the townsfolk liberated by his father Louis. The New Mexico Military Museum is located near downtown Santa Fe at 1050 Old Pecos Trail. For more information, contact Museum Collection manager Lareta Huit at (505) 476-1476 or auretam.huit@state.nm.us

August DVS Benefits Outreach Visits

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has scheduled in-office veterans benefits outreaches in August at the locations below.

Veterans or their eligible dependents can drop by to get information about or help with filing VA claims, applying for state veterans benefits, or assistance with any other issues a veteran needs help with.

<u>Date</u>	<u>City/Venue</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Time</u>
Aug. 3	Edgewood /Community Library	171B NM 344	10am-2pm
Aug. 4	Capitan /Public Library	101 East 2nd St.	10am-3pm
Aug. 15	Bernalillo /Sandoval County Administrative Bldg.	1500 Idalia Rd.	10am-2pm
Aug. 18	Wingate /Wingate High School	1731 Shush Dr.	10am-4pm
Aug. 19	Sandia Park /Vista Grande Community Center	15 La Madera Rd.	10am-2pm
Aug. 22	Albuquerque /North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center	7521 Carmel Ave. NE	10am-2pm
Aug. 26	Rio Rancho /Loma Colorado Main Library	755 Loma Colorado Blvd. NE	10am-2pm
Aug. 29	Albuquerque /North Valley Senior Center	3825 4th Street NW	noon-4pm
Aug. 30	Albuquerque /VA Hospital Lobby	1501 San Pedro Dr. SE	10am-2pm

DVS has also scheduled the following Veterans Property Tax Exemption/Waiver outreach stop:

Aug. 10	Los Lunas /Valencia County Assessor's Office	444 Luna Ave.	10am-2pm
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DVS and Valencia County Assessor's Office staff will help veterans or unmarried widows of veterans file for the veterans property tax exemption—which is a \$4,000 reduction off the taxable value of a primary residence. Veterans rated by the VA as 100% permanent-and-total, service-connected disabled can file for the *veterans property tax waiver*, which eliminates the entire property tax bill. Unmarried widows of veterans can also apply for this waiver.

Proof of veteran status and NM residency required

Proof of veteran status must be provided when filing for the veterans property tax exemption or waiver—and can be done by bringing either a copy of a veteran's DD-214 separation form, a National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Form 56-16, or a U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Form 1867.

If filing for the property tax waiver, please bring a copy of the letter from VA declaring a 100% permanent-and-total, service-connected disability rating. Proof of residency must also be provided, and can be one by bringing either a valid New Mexico driver's license, voter registration card, or your latest state income tax return. For more information please contact DVS Event Planner Joseph Dorn at josephM.dorn@state.nm.us or (505) 861-9117.

As a reminder, veterans from anywhere in the state can also contact any DVS veterans service officer with in-person office assistance...or through remote (*DVS offices and contact information can be found on the back two pages of this newsletter*)



**BCSO Deputy
Michael Levison**

BCSO Deputy/NMANG Airman Among Four First Responders Killed in Helicopter Crash

A member of the New Mexico Air National Guard (NMARNG) was one of four men who died when a Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) helicopter crashed on July 16 in San Miguel County.

BCSO Deputy Michael Levison, who was also a NMARNG tech sergeant serving since 2011, was aboard BCSO's "Metro 2" helicopter returning to Albuquerque after the helicopter's four-man crew spent the day helping firefighters battle the East Mesa Fire near Las Vegas (NM). The helicopter crashed around 7:20 p.m. not far from the fire area. Also killed were the pilot, BCSO Undersheriff Larry Koren, BCSO Lt. Fred Beers, and Bernalillo County Fire and Rescue Specialist Matthew King. The cause of the crash is under

investigation.

"It is with a sad and broken heart that we think of the heroes we lost this weekend," BCSO Sheriff Manuel Gonzales and Bernalillo County Fire Chief Greg Perez said in a joint statement. "They paid the ultimate price, and we are forever grateful the love and passion they had as first-responders."

Navajo Code Talker Samuel Sandoval Passes Away

Samuel Sandoval, one of the last remaining Navajo Code Talkers who transmitted messages in World War II using a code based on their native language, passed away on July 29 in Shiprock. He was 98.

Sandoval was born in Nageezi, NM, and joined the Marine Corps after attending a western-run high school that, ironically, discouraged him from speaking in his Native Navajo. After completing basic training, he became one of just 416 United States Marines recruited as "Code Talkers" from the Navajo nation tasked with devising and then using a secret communications code used by U.S. Forces in the Pacific theater of World War II. This code was developed from what was then their unwritten Navajo language. It confounded Japanese intelligence—leading to the downfall of Japan. Sandoval was in fact on Okinawa and was part of the "chain" that relayed word of Japan surrendering the island.



Samuel Sandoval

In addition to Okinawa, he also saw combat in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, and Peleliu before earning an honorable discharge in 1946. He eventually became certified as a substance abuse counselor in the Farmington area.

"The significance of the work by the Navajo Code Talkers cannot be stressed enough," said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. "They helped turn the tide in the war against Japan and bring an end to World War II. The free world today will forever be grateful to Mr. Sandoval and his fellow U.S. Marine Code Talkers."

Sandoval is survived by his wife Malula, and eleven children. (*Funeral services are pending as of this newsletter's publication date*) With his passing, only three Navajo Code Talkers are alive today.

Last Surviving WWII Medal of Honor Recipient Passes Away

Hershel “Woody” Williams passed away on June 29 at the age of 98 in his hometown of Huntington, WV.

Mr. Williams was our nation’s last surviving World War II Medal of Honor Recipient. He served with the 1st Battalion, 21st Marines, and was awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation’s highest combat award, by President Harry S. Truman on October 5, 1945.



Hershel “Woody”
Williams
(1923-2022)

The Medal of Honor is awarded by Congress to a member of the armed forces for gallantry and bravery in combat, at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. Mr. Williams was honored for his actions eight months earlier, on February 21, during the Battle of Iwo Jima. On that date, the diminutive Williams, who was 5’6” tall, was a giant during the opening hours after U.S. Marines stormed the Japanese-held island just 750 miles from the Japanese mainland.

Corporal Williams and three other Marines was ordered to forge ahead of their unit, which was pinned down by heavy fire, to neutralize a heavily fortified Japanese “pill box.” The three Marines were soon wounded. Williams, however, was not, and fought his way forward to the enemy position. Using a flame thrower, he wiped out that position and returned to his company to re-arm for re-engagement.

Battling heavy enemy fire, Williams fought for four more hours, repeatedly returning for demolition charges and to refuel his flame thrower. He went on to destroy the five remaining pillboxes that had pinned down his company, while suffering only minor physical injuries.

Cpl. Williams fought for five more weeks in various other battles and was awarded a Purple Heart due to shrapnel wounds incurred a month after his epic Iwo Jima actions.

After the war, Williams worked for 33 years as a Veterans Affairs counselor.

He also found himself dealing with the after effects of combat stress. In 1962, Mr. Williams experienced a religious renewal, and for the next 35-years was a chaplain with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

Mr. Williams’ legacy and dedication to veterans and their families will also continue through the Woody Williams Foundation, which he founded and has helped build 103 Gold Star Family memorials across the country—including one here in San Juan County that will be dedicated this fall.

“Mr. Williams will forever be remembered for his sacrifices while serving our country,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “But we will also remember him for his post-war dedication to helping veterans and their families. He is truly a hero.”

Veterans Community Bulletin Board

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 government agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers for publication in *The Guardian* announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will run 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 to publish any flyer.



Veterans Resource Fair

August 5th, 2022

9am – 3pm

NTU Wellness Center

Crownpoint, NM

- Veterans Housing Assistance
- VA Benefits
- Financial Assistance
- Other resources/organizations available
(State, Navajo Nation, County)

**For more information, contact Navajo Nation Veterans
Administration Eastern Agency at 505-786-2030**





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Presents the Inaugural



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VETERAN & FAMILY ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

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**"PROVIDE AND SUPPORT
NEW MEXICO VETERANS
WITH PROGRAMS AND
SERVICES TO ENRICH
THEIR LIVES AND THE
LIVES OF THEIR
FAMILIES."**

**SATURDAY
AUG. 20, 2022**

**START TIMES:
REGISTRATION AT 11:30A
TEE OFF - SHOTGUN 1P**



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**FOR MORE INFO CONTACT
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575-640-4751
FELIPE@BACKTOBASICS HC.COM**



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- Equine experiences to teach non-verbal communication skills

2022 Retreat Dates:

***May 1-8**

***June 5-12**

***August 21-28**

*** October 23-30**

**For more retreat information and to download an application,
please visit**

<http://www.VeteransWellnessAndHealing.org>

email or call us at:

info@veteranswellnessandhealing.org



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SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 3
8AM - 1PM



ENTRY FEE
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IN SANTA FE**



Housing Outreach Mentorship Encouragement (H.O.M.E)



The H.O.M.E. Program provides transitional housing, on-site case management, food, clothing, transportation, child care subsidy/assistance, employment support, and other essential support services to homeless women Veterans and their children.

The H.O.M.E. Program focuses on integrating women Veterans into their local communities and choosing safe and suitable residential areas.

Our H.O.M.E. Program collaborates with our resource partners that include targeted supportive services to help women Veterans reach their goals.

Although based in the D.C. Metro Area, our programs have assisted women Veterans and children in over 32 States and Territories.

We also assist with permanent placement once Veterans are ready to transition from our residential facilities.

H.O.M.E Eligibility

1. Must have an "honorable or under honorable conditions" discharge; verified by DD-214*. (*Requires completion of initial service obligation (ISO), unless medically discharged)

2. Must be willing to adhere to terms of the Resident Agreement and 2-Year Plan for Independence.

Note 1: Final Salute, Inc. will review discharges beyond honorable conditions on a case-by-case basis.

Note 2: Financial education classes are mandatory as part of the H.O.M.E. Program.

To apply for H.O.M.E (housing assistance) please [click here](#)



For women Vets. By women Vets.

MISSION

Final Salute Inc. (FSI) 's mission is to provide homeless women Veterans and their children with safe and suitable housing.

The federal government estimates there are currently 55,000 homeless women Veterans in the United States on any given day. For the sacrifices they and their families made, this is an unacceptable state. Final Salute Inc. believes in paying women Veterans with the proper respect due to them for the service they have provided to our country. Final Salute also works with the Veteran in establishing her plan towards independence. [Veteran Homelessness White Paper V2.pdf](#)

FSI was established to identify and meet the unique needs of homeless women Veterans and their children.

Next Uniform

The Next Uniform provides support for women Veterans and military women in transition. As a woman Veteran in transition, you need more than a resume to ensure a successful transition into the civilian workforce.

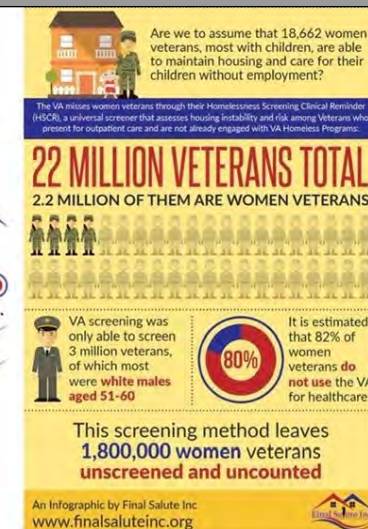
We provide (free of charge):

- Professional Business Attire
- Dress Shoes
- Accessories
- Make-Overs
- Image Consulting
- Professional Head-Shots (Linked-In Profiles)



The purpose of this event is to honor the service and sacrifice you have made to this great nation and support our Sisters-in-Arms who are in transition or have transitioned and may need an image boost.

We realize that some women Veterans, especially single mothers, may find the cost of securing an up-to-date professional wardrobe unattainable.



Savings Assessment and Financial Education (S.A.F.E)



The purpose of S.A.F.E. is to prevent homelessness by easing financial hardships.

Our S.A.F.E. program also provides valuable financial education resources on saving, budgeting, and living on a fixed income.

S.A.F.E. provides emergency financial support by assisting with past due rent, security deposits, and utility assistance.

Residents of our H.O.M.E. program must participate in the financial education component of our S.A.F.E. program.

The S.A.F.E. program is open to women Veterans and members of the U.S. Military Reserve and Guard component forces, regardless of their location. Our programs have assisted women Veterans and children in over 30 States and Territories.

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S.A.F.E ELIGIBILITY

1. Proof of Veteran* status or current U.S. Military Reserve/Guard component service. (*Requires completion of initial service obligation (ISO), unless medically discharged)
2. Copies of the bills that you are having difficulty paying (must be past due).
3. Military I.D. (if Reserve or Guard)
4. Final Salute, Inc. may also request additional documents such as an Employment Letter.

To apply for S.A.F.E (financial assistance) please [click here](#)

Please be advised, assistance is dependent upon funding currently available.

<https://www.finalsaluteinc.org/AssistanceRequest.html>



News from the VA



**NEW NUMBER,
SAME SUPPORT.**

Dial 988 then Press 1.
Share it with your networks.

VA Updates Its Veterans Crisis Line Phone Number

The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a new crisis line phone number.

In response to the [National Suicide Hotline Designation Act](#) designating the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, VA has made it more user friendly to access the [Veterans Crisis Line](#). Veterans have the option to [Dial 988 then Press 1](#) to connect with caring, qualified responders for 24/7 crisis support.

“During a crisis, every second counts,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “This new, shorter number makes it easier for veterans and those who care about them to reach lifesaving support without having to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care.”

Reducing veteran suicide is the top clinical priority for VA. Enhancing suicide prevention crisis services is a key component for President Joe Biden’s strategy on reducing veteran suicide, as well as President Biden’s [comprehensive strategy](#) to address the country’s national mental health crisis.

VA operates the Veterans Crisis Line through the 988 Lifeline’s national network and thus collaborated to accomplish the successful transition. During two years of preparation, the department has added hundreds of crisis line employees and responder staff, with still more hiring underway, and has strengthened call center infrastructure.

The Veterans Crisis Line is a critical component of the nation’s largest integrated suicide prevention network. It links to more than 500 suicide prevention coordinators across the VA health care system, ensuring coordination into follow-up services as part of a full continuum of care.

Individuals who call the Veterans Crisis Line are five times more likely to have less distress and less suicidal ideation from the beginning to end of the call.

While [Dial 988 then Press 1](#) is a new option for contacting the Veterans Crisis Line, the original number: 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, remains available, and Veterans can continue to reach out via chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#) or by text to 838255.

VA Launches Improved Access to Care Website

Based on feedback from veterans and VA Secretary Denis McDonough's commitment to ensuring timely access to care, VA has launched an improved [Access to Care website](#) that now offers a simplified, user-friendly experience to make it easier for veterans to make informed decisions as they plan their health care appointments. Veterans and the public can now access information for care delivered through VA facilities and will have a clearer view of average wait times, with more detailed information on available health care services and specialties.



“VA is listening to veterans, incorporating their feedback and reviewing access to care across the organization,” said Deputy Under Secretary for Health Steven L. Lieberman, M.D. “As a national leader in health care access and transparency, this change in the presentation of veteran-facing information ensures veterans receive the world-class care they have earned and deserve.”

The new Access to Care website also ensures that as VA sites transition to a new electronic health record management system, veterans will have information on timeliness for care at those facilities.

VA Services 10,000 Loans for Veterans Borrowing From Their Life Insurance Policies

VA has announced it has paid out more than \$6.7 million across 10,000 loans since mid-May 2021 through its [Instant Loan Approval](#), a feature that automates the loan approval process for veterans.

Provided through [VA Insurance Service](#), the Instant Loan Approval process offers eligible veterans the option to [borrow the cash value](#) of their VA-administered life insurance policy by streamlining the online loan request process and offering a quick automated decision.

Loan options are available for the following VA-administered programs:

- National Service Life Insurance
- Veterans' Special Life Insurance
- Veterans' Reopened Insurance
- Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

“When a veteran with an eligible life insurance policy holding cash value applies and is approved for a loan online, the payment is deposited directly into their bank account within two to five business days, which is helpful in times of need,” said VA Insurance Executive Director Dan Keenaghan.

[VA Insurance Service](#) also helps veterans with online application uploads and answers questions through its phone center, accessing benefits [online](#) faster and more secure than by postage mail.

Learn more about [Instant Loan Approvals](#) and other [online tools and features](#).



DVS Field Offices in New Mexico

DVS has field offices throughout the state that are staffed with nationally-certified veterans service officers. These VSOs are military veterans themselves who are dedicated to helping their fellow veterans with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or helping with anything else a veteran or their family needs.

Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday (excluding holidays). Though this service is free, appointments are required and can be made by contacting the offices below.

Please note that in addition to in-office assistance, veterans from anywhere in the state can contact *any* DVS VSO for phone or email assistance.

Also listed below and on the following page is the contact information for the DVS women veterans program for women veterans who prefer assistance by a woman VSO, and the DVS Tribal/Pueblo Liaison for Native American veterans preferring assistance from a Native American VSO. Contact information is also listed for the Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries, and the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) for veterans who want to open, expand, or purchase a business—or bid on state or federal government contracts.

Alamogordo

VSO: David Henley

411 10th Street #107

(575) 937-5620

david.henley1@state.nm.us

Albuquerque

Jesus Palomino

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 681-6998

jesus.palomino1@state.nm.us

Albuquerque

Dayle BadWarrior

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 383-2400

dayle.badwarrior1@state.nm.us

Albuquerque

Patrick Abney

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 525-3331

patrick.abney@state.nm.us

Carlsbad

Dagmar Youngberg

101 N. Halagueno

(575) 988-5900

dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us

Clovis

Matt Barela

904 W. Sixth St.

(575) 825-9602

matthew.barela@state.nm.us

Farmington

Please contact DVS Pueblos/Tribal liaison Beverly Charley for assistance at (575) 241-3322 or

beverly.charley@state.nm.us. Or

contact any DVS field office for help by phone or email.

Gallup

John Livingston

908 E. Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A

(505) 389-8731

john.livingston@state.nm.us

Grants

Temporarily vacant. Please contact any DVS office for phone or email assistance.

(more offices are listed on the next page)

Hobbs**Fred Solis-Little**

2120 North Alto St.

(575) 241-0714

fred.solis-little@state.nm.us**Las Cruces****Vincent Tellez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.

(505) 216-8782

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 New Mexico University

Juan Chacon Bldg./Room 138-A

1000 West College Ave.

(575) 313-5627

christopher.teran@state.nm.us**Pueblos/Tribal Liaison****Beverly Charley**

San Juan College Veterans Center

4601 College Blvd./Room 1715-B

(575) 241-3322

beverly.charley@state.nm.us**Ft. Stanton State Veterans Cemetery****Stephen McConnell (Supervisor)**

1398 State Highway 220

(505) 383-4381

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**Taos***Office to be reopened/VSO to be hired.**An announcement should be made by the end of August.***Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)****Rich Coffel (Director)**

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (ABQ)

(505) 220-9932

richardL.coffel@state.nm.us**Gallup State Veterans Cemetery****Gilbert Lopez (Supervisor)**

333 National Cemetery Dr.

(505) 905-9771

Las Cruces**Miguel Martinez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.

(505) 216-8782

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**Women Veterans Program***Temporarily vacant. Please contact DVS**Field Services Division Director**Robin Wilson for assistance at**(505) 219-5564 or*robin.wilson@state.us**Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery****Randy Myklebust (Supervisor)**

34 Country Club Rd.

(505) 225-4341