



The Guardian

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

- www.nmdvs.org
- phone: (505) 383-2400
- nmdvs.info@dvs.nm.gov (email)
- Facebook: NMDVSHHealthcare2015
- Twitter: @NMDVS
- Instagram: newmexicoveterans

DVS Resumes 15-County Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has resumed its *Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program* offering free round-trip rides to veterans to and from their home and any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or VA-approved medical appointments.

The free round-trip rides are available to any veteran living in the following 15 New Mexico counties that VA categorizes as “highly rural”—counties with no more than seven veterans per every 1,000 residents: Catron, Cibola, Colfax, De Baca, Guadalupe, Harding, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Union (see map on next page).

“We’re excited to once again provide this free transportation service for veterans to use for their VA medical appointments,” said DVS Healthcare Coordination Division Director Diane Mourning Brown. “Lack of transportation options should not be a reason for a veteran to neglect their health care needs. So we encourage veterans in these 15 counties to contact us and make an appointment for their free round-trip rides.”

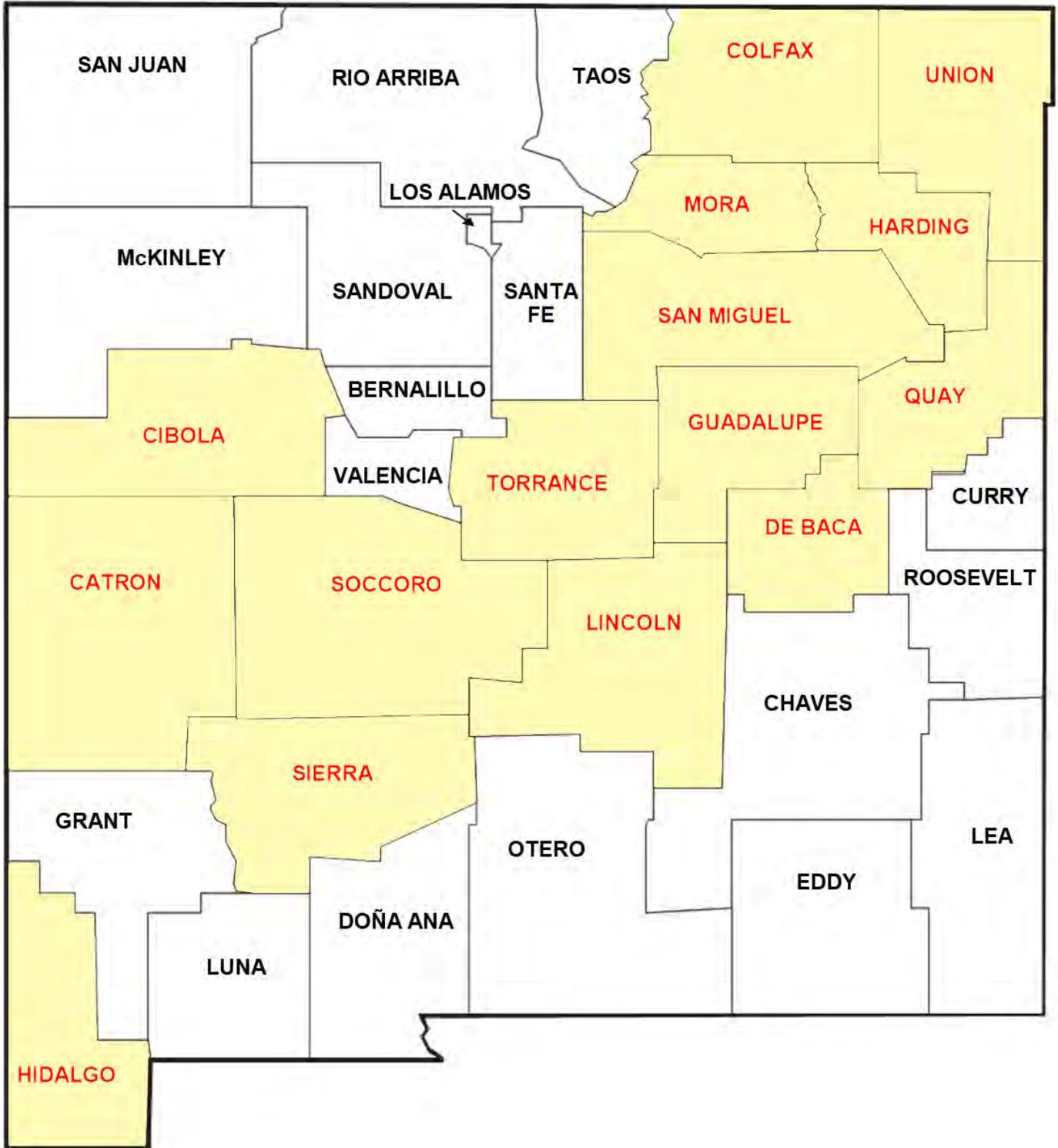
Reservations Are Required

DVS has contracted with four transportation companies to provide the round-trip rides. Veterans must contact DVS to make a reservation by **calling the Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program reservation number at (505) 429-5906** Monday- Friday from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Reservations must be made at least three days before a scheduled appointment at a VA or VA pre-approved medical facility. One of the contracted transportation companies will contact the veteran 24-hours before the pickup date to confirm the reservation. On the day of the appointment, the driver will remain at or in the vicinity of the scheduled medical facility for the duration of the appointment.

“DVS is very aware that many veterans in other counties, even in our larger non-rural counties, also do not have transportation options available to them for their medical appointments,” said Mourning Brown. “We are working on solutions, both legislatively and through other partnerships, to address this.”

If you have any non-reservation-related questions about the DVS Highly Rural Veterans Transportation program, contact Connie Vargas at connie.vargas@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 372-8804.

The 15 Counties Served by the DVS Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program





PACT ACT Town Hall Meeting

Presented by:

*N.M. VA Health Care System
Albuquerque Regional VA Benefits Office
New Mexico Dept. of Veteran Service*

Hosted by:

Highlands University Veterans Resource Center

A presentation about the new PACT Act law that expands VA health care to Vietnam, Gulf, and Iraq/Afghanistan War veterans suffering from exposure to "Agent Orange," burn pits, and other toxic substances while in service.

20 new "presumptive" conditions have now been added to VA's treatment eligibility list.

When: Dec. 14, 2022

Time: 9:45 am to 12 noon

Where: Sanchez Lecture Hall Rm: G-35

Highlands University, Las Vegas, N.M

Guest speakers will be:

Director Robert McKenrick, NMVAHCS and

Director Cesar Romero, VBA

Donnie Quintana, Interim Cabinet Secretary

To livestream the town hall meeting:

[Access.live/2022PACTActTownHall](https://access.live/2022PACTActTownHall); or call

(855) 531-1092



Date & Venue Set for DVS First Quarterly Briefing of 2023

DVS is scheduled to present the agency's first quarterly briefing of 2023 on January 4 in Taos at the County Administration Complex (105 Albright St.). Agency representatives will outline agency plans for next year and beyond. DVS will also give an update on veteran-related legislation expected to be introduced in the 2023 60-day legislative session that convenes January 17. DVS will videotape the briefing and post the video on its website for those who can't attend the briefing.



Beverly Charley
DVS Pueblo & Tribal Liaison

DVS Pueblo & Tribal Liaison Recognized as One of Eleven “New Mexico True Heroes”

DVS Pueblo & Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley has been recognized by New Mexico Magazine as one of eleven recipients of its 2022 *New Mexico True Heroes Award*. The announcement was made by New Mexico Tourism Department Cabinet Secretary Jen Schroer on November 16 in a videotaped message posted on the agency's website revealing the eleven award recipients and through the agency's social media network.

“Our true heroes are eleven exceptional individuals who have distinguished themselves as community leaders, creators, and activators who are building a better New Mexico for all of us,” said Secretary Schroer. “The designation as a New Mexico True Hero recognizes New Mexicans who work hard every day to uplift others, and support causes beyond themselves.”

Charley was honored for her work helping veterans in her hometown of Farmington and the Four Corners area—especially homeless and low-income veterans. She was instrumental in organizing the area's annual San Juan County Homeless Veterans Stand Down ten years ago to bring together dozens of veterans and community service agencies to provide services, health care referrals, employment and housing assistance, clothing, and food for area homeless veterans.

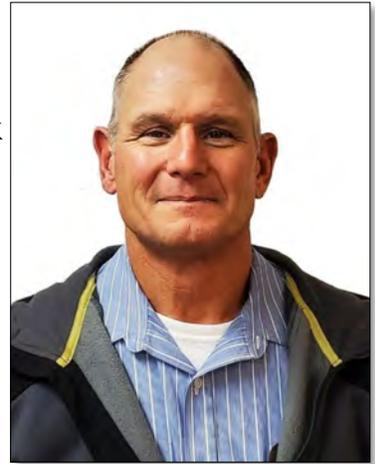
“This is an incredible honor, to even be nominated for this prestigious award. This is really, really humbling,” said Charley. “I sincerely want to thank New Mexico Magazine. To help a veteran in need gives me a lot of satisfaction. To be recognized and thanked for what I love doing is just icing on the cake.”

The Farmington native served 14-years in the Army and was deployed to Somalia, Iraq, and twice to Haiti. She came to DVS in 2015 as the agency's Farmington-based veterans service officer tasked with helping veterans and their eligible dependents with filing VA claims, applying for state veterans benefits, and generally helping with any other issues veterans or their families face. A proud member of the Navajo Nation, she was appointed last year as the agency's inaugural pueblo and tribal liaison to focus specifically on helping New Mexico's 9,700 Native American veterans.

DVS Alamogordo VSO Makes Special Donation to Veteran In Need

Santa Claus made an early visit to the Alamogordo home of Army veteran Jack M. Franklin—courtesy of DVS Alamogordo-based Veterans Service Officer David Henley.

Henley, with the help of the New Mexico Workforce Connection Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist Michael Gardner, delivered an electric-powered recliner chair to Franklin, who served in the Army from 1956-1958 and is currently experiencing some health issues.



David Henley
DVS Alamogordo-based VSO

The chair was bought eight years ago to relieve some service-connected disabilities of Henley's stepfather, Vietnam Veteran Lawrence Makinson. But Makinson passed before ever using the chair.

It then sat in storage for nearly eight years. Henley's Mom was waiting for the perfect opportunity to bless another veteran with a device to ease and comfort their health needs.

Franklin was that Veteran.

Henley brought the chair to his DVS office with the help of DVOP Michael Gardner. Henley invited Franklin to stop by and "test drive" the chair. He did and fell in love with it. Franklin's caregiver then had someone deliver it to Franklin's home.

"I just want you to know how much I appreciate your officer Dave Henley," wrote Franklin in an email to DVS. "His attention to my needs for a lift chair is very much appreciated. I especially appreciate the generosity of his mother. The chair is making life easier. Thank you!"

Henley was equally appreciative.

"I'm always looking for any opportunity to help a fellow veteran," said the retired USAF Master Sergeant. "It makes my mom and I feel really good that someone in need will be able to use the reclining lift chair. We hope Mr. Franklin enjoys many, many comfortable years ahead using it."



SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 2023



2023



**WOMEN VETERANS
CONFERENCE**

"STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE"

RSVP early and reserve your seat today!

Space is limited

Email: theresa.figueroa@dvs.nm.gov

Medal of Honor Recipient and Gallup Resident Hiroshi Miyamura Passes Away

Former U.S. Army Sergeant Hiroshi Miyamura, who was awarded the U.S. Medal of Honor for holding off an attack to allow an American squad to withdraw during the Korean War, passed away on November 29 in Phoenix, AZ. He was 97-years old.

Native son of Gallup

Born and raised in Gallup, Miyamura was the son of Japanese immigrants who emigrated to Gallup to seek a better life. They operated a 24-hour diner near the Navajo Nation, where the family interacted with the diverse population of miners and travelers who passed along Route 66—which earned the younger Miyamura a lifetime of acceptance by the Navajo people.



Hiroshi Miyamura
Medal of Honor Recipient



Miyamura worked as an auto mechanic during high school. He joined the U.S. Army late in World War II after the federal government lifted restrictions on Japanese Americans serving. Miyamura was allowed to enter the 442nd Infantry Regiment, composed almost entirely of *Nisei* (NEE-say)— a Japanese term for those born in the U.S. to Japanese immigrants.

After the WWII, Miyamura met Terry Tsuchimori, a woman from a family who had been forced to live at the Poston internment camp in southwestern Arizona following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. They married in 1948 and had three children. Miyamura then continued to serve in the Army

Reserves. He was recalled to active duty in 1950, shortly after the U.S. involvement in the war between South Korea and Communist North Korea.

A True Act of Heroism

Corporal Miyamura was awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest combat award, for his actions on April 24-25, 1951, near Taejon-ni. On the night of April 24, Miyamura's U.S. Army company came under a ferocious attack by Chinese forces which were supporting North Korea.

Miyamura ordered his squad to retreat--while he stayed ahead and continued to fight, giving his men enough time to safely evacuate. He was credited with eliminating 50 Chinese soldiers before he and fellow squad leader Joseph Lawrence Annello of Castle Rock, Colorado, were captured.



President Dwight Eisenhower presents Hiroshi Miyamura with the Medal of Honor at the White House on October 27, 1953. Miyamura was also promoted to staff sergeant.

(continued on next page)



Yaichi and Tori Miyamura welcome their son Hiroshi upon his return to the U.S. after his release from Communist Chinese captivity during the Korean War.

Though wounded, Miyamura carried the injured Anello for several miles until Chinese soldiers ordered him at gunpoint to leave Anello by the side of a road. Miyamura kept refusing, until Anello himself convinced Miyamura to obey the order.

Miyamura was held as a prisoner for two years and four months. Meanwhile, Anello was taken to another POW camp, from which he successfully escaped and was picked up by U.S. forces.

Upon Miyamura's release on August 23, 1953, he was presented the Medal of Honor by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It had already been secretly authorized while Miyamura was still in captivity because Army officials feared grave consequences for Miyamura if his captors learned of his heroic and deadly actions.

After the war, Miyamura returned to Gallup a hero. More than 5,000 people came to meet his train. He spent much of his life working in town as an auto mechanic, while he and Terry raised three children. Miyamura remained active in supporting fellow veterans including work with the Wounded Warrior Project. Miyamura was a Lifetime Member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1.

Terry Miyamura passed away on December 10, 2014. In addition to their three children, Hiroshi Miyamura is also survived by three grandchildren. He will be buried on December 10 at Sunset Memorial Park...next to his beloved Terry.



Hiroshi and Terry Miyamura at their Gallup home.

Upon learning of his death, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham issued an executive order that all flags in New Mexico are to be flown at half-staff until the funeral.

“The bravery displayed by former Corporal Miyamura during combat in the Korean War to protect his fellow soldiers is the stuff of legends,” said the governor. “His efforts not only saved American lives, but went toward the greater cause of preserving our liberty and freedom here at home.”

She added “I have often said that I am proud to be the governor of a state that is home to so many dedicated servicemembers – they represent the best of us. I offer my profound thanks to Mr. Miyamura for his sacrifice and my sincere condolences to his family. I pray for peace and comfort as they mourn this great loss.”

Wreaths Across America Day is December 17

Members of the public will be placing pre-paid Christmas holiday wreaths on veterans' gravesites at cemeteries across the country on Wreaths Across America Day December 17.

Included among these cemeteries are the three DVS-managed state cemeteries in Angel Fire, Gallup, and Fort Stanton—and the now-closed historical Fort Stanton Merchant Marine Cemetery. The wreaths have been bought by citizens across the country to remember and honor deceased veterans during the Christmas holiday season. Members of the public can then show up at a participating cemetery to lay these pre-paid wreaths upon veterans gravesites. Wreaths will also be laid at the Santa Fe and Fort Bayard National Cemeteries, and at public cemeteries throughout the state. The wreath-laying begins at 10 a.m., to coincide with the noon EDT ceremony at the Arlington National Cemetery.



Last year's Wreaths Across America Day at the Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery

DVS, Dept. of Health Kick Off Operation Holiday Cheer 2022

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and the Department of Health kicked off *Operation Holiday Cheer 2022* on December 1.

Launched three years ago, Operation Holiday Cheer urges New Mexicans to send Christmas holiday season cards to bring holiday greetings and cheer to residents and staff of the state veterans homes in Truth or Consequences and Fort Bayard. Many of the resident veterans have little or no contact with family—not only during the holiday season, but throughout the year. Some residents do not any surviving family members.

Additionally, many of the home's staff work through the holiday season to provide year-round, round-the-clock care for the residents. Cards should be sent directly to the homes. They will be randomly and evenly distributed among residents and staff. Cards for residents 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.

Cards should be mailed to:

New Mexico State Veterans Home
992 South Broadway
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901
ATTN: Operation Holiday Cheer

Fort Bayard State Veterans Home
41 Fort Bayard Rd.
Santa Clara, NM 88026
ATTN: Operation Holiday Cheer

30 New Mexico National Guard Members Return after Ten-Month Deployment

Thirty soldiers from the New Mexico Army National Guard's 3631st Signal Company returned to New Mexico on November 15 from a ten-month deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Spartan Shield in the Middle East.

The soldiers were greeted by family members at the Guard's Rio Rancho Readiness Center.

The members of the 3631st served as communications experts--doing everything from maintaining signal equipment, to providing radio support for the 36th Sustainment Brigade from the Texas National Guard and other forces in the region.



Sgt. 1st Class Maryann Lujan (at right) and Staff Sgt. Benjamin Baca reunite after Sgt. Baca deployed with the 3631st Signal Company



Staff Sgt. Robert Chavez, a signal support systems specialist who deployed with the 3631st Signal Company, reunites with his children following a ten month deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Spartan Shield in the Middle East.

While the unit itself was relatively small, its responsibilities and expertise were critical to the success of the mission of the 36th Sustainment Brigade and its subordinate units. Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Cordova, who deployed as a cable systems installer-maintainer, brought the experience of four previous deployments to the unit.

"Being in a supervisory role was my primary function, just taking care of teams and soldiers," said Sgt. Cordova. "They did a lot of sustaining. We would work a lot with our equipment to ensure it was working properly when needed."

Many of the soldiers had never deployed or spent so long away from their families. 1st Lt. Elrond Wedel, who commanded the deployed soldiers, had been activated once before to support the state's COVID-19 response, but had not yet deployed overseas. He left his wife, Sheree, and three daughters, during the deployment.

"I didn't think we would get to see him for Thanksgiving," Sheree said. "We just wanted to give him a hug and see him again. It was really hard at first because we knew it would be a long time. But we could communicate through video, and we spent a lot of time with family to make the time go by faster."

(story and photos courtesy of Sgt. Iain Jaramillo/NM Army National Guard, 111th Sustainment Brigade.)

New Mexico Arts Announces Mini-Grants for Veteran and Military Service Arts Projects

New Mexico Arts (NMA), the state's arts agency, has created a funding opportunity for arts organizations and veteran-focused organizations to create or expand opportunities for veterans and active-duty service members to engage with the arts. NMA is offering \$2,000 mini grants with a short application process that does not require matching funding in this first-year pilot program.



“The Arts and the Military Initiative is rooted in NMA’s mission to ensure the arts are central to the lives of New Mexicans,” said Michelle Laflamme-Childs, executive director of NMA. “We invite arts and culture organizations from across the state to look at how these mini grants might support expanding their existing programming to include this important constituency. In addition, we encourage more traditional veteran-serving organizations to consider how the arts might be integrated into their programs.”

Proposed projects should serve military and veteran audiences, including active-duty service members, reservists, National Guard members, veterans, their families and caregivers, and others. Projects could fall into three categories:

- **Learning-based arts projects**, including classes and workshops, held both in-person and online.
- **Audience-based arts projects**, including performances, exhibitions, and festivals, held in-person or online.
- **Capacity-building projects**, including professional development opportunities, consultant services, program research, development, and evaluation expenses.

Eligible applicants should be Federal 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organizations, units of government, schools, colleges, universities, and Indian tribal government entities. Organizations receiving New Mexico Arts funding in other grant programs can also apply for this Arts and the Military grant opportunity. The deadline to apply for the grants is January 13, 2023, at 5 p.m. MST.

New Mexico has more than 148,000 veterans residing in the state with military retirees in all 33 counties. 7% of the adults in the state are veterans, a higher percentage than neighboring states and the 12th largest veteran-to-adult population in the United States.

Interested parties can find the application and guidelines for these Arts and the Military mini grants at <https://www.nmarts.org/nma-military/>.

For more information, contact Arts and the Military Program Coordinator, Kevin Lenkner, (505) 412-5791 or email kevin.lenkner@dca.nm.gov.

Veterans Day Celebrated Throughout New Mexico



DVS division directors and other staff marked Veterans Day on November 11 by attending the 2022 Southwest Native American Veterans Health & Wellness Symposium at the Isleta Casino and Resort (left photo).

The event was presented by Isleta Pueblo, the Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Association, the new Mexico VA Health Care System, and AARP New Mexico.

fallen, missing, or imprisoned military service members.

Later in the program, DVS Healthcare Coordination Division Director Diane Mourning Brown presented information about the agency’s Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program offering free round-trip rides for veterans to and from their home in 15 designated counties and any VA medical appointment (see the front page for information about this free program)



Other presentations were provided by representatives from the New Mexico VA Health Care System, Albuquerque VA Regional Office, Santa Fe National Cemetery, AARP New Mexico, and the New Mexico Veterans Integration Center on the following:

- Access to VA health care
- Dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Housing assistance for homeless & at-risk veterans
- Health services for women veterans
- Steps to take when a veteran passes away
- VA home loans
- Medicare eligibility and solutions

(All three photos courtesy: Ron Bassford/
Public Affairs Specialist/
NMVA Health Care System)



The presenting agencies will be partnering to discuss these topics at events throughout the state in 2023.

Veterans Day Observances in Other Communities

The following pages feature photos of other Veterans Day ceremonies and events throughout the state—with photos provided to DVS by veterans attending the events.

Las Cruces



Left Photo (L to R): Jesus Morales/El Paso VA Health Care System Caregiver Support Program, DVS Veterans Service Officer Miguel Martinez, and DVS Veterans Service officer Vince Tellez distributed information and answered questions about VA health care benefits at a Veterans Day appreciation picnic on November 8 at New Mexico State University.



Right Photo (L to R): DVS Veterans Service Officer Vince Tellez, New Mexico State University Military & Veterans Program Coordinator Gail Bamford, and DVS Veterans Service Officer Miguel Martinez were busy answering questions at NMSU's ROTC/Armed Forces Recruiters Day on November 9.

Angel Fire



Left Photo: Staff from the DVS-managed Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery placed American flags at all 93 veterans gravesites. *(photo courtesy: Randy Myklebust/Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery supervisor)*



Right Photo: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Manager DB Herbst *(left/at podium)* addresses the crowd gathered for the DVS-managed memorial's annual Veterans Day ceremony, which was moved indoors due to cold temperatures. *(photo courtesy: Vietnam Veterans Memorial staff)*

Albuquerque



Left Photo: American flags lined Loop Road on Veterans Day near the Fisher House on the campus of the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center. *(photo courtesy: Fermin Ortega/Chief Operating Officer, New Mexico Veterans Integration Centers)*



Right Photo: Loop Road was part of the route of the annual Veterans Day Parade, which began at USS Bullhead Memorial Park and concluded at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial *(photo courtesy: The New Mexico National Guard)*



Left Photo: Following the parade, the Dukes of Albuquerque American Legion Band performed a musical prelude/concert prior to the city's annual Veterans Day ceremony at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial.



Right Photo: The Laguna-Acoma Buffalo Dance group performed ceremonial dances at a Veterans Day Ceremony outside the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center. *(both photos courtesy: Larry Campos/NMVAHCS Congressional Liaison)*

Albuquerque (Historic Fairview Cemetery)



At the Historic Fairview Albuquerque Cemetery, American flags were placed at many of the veterans gravesites prior to the cemetery’s annual Veterans Day ceremony. Nearly 500 veterans—some dating back to our nation’s Civil War-- are believed to be buried at the cemetery, which closed in 2012. The flags were placed by members of VFW Post 10763, Boy Scout Troops 442, 85, and 3, the Cub Scouts and the Buffalo Soldiers Society of New Mexico (photos courtesy: Albuquerque Historic Fairview)

ABQ (Barelas Senior Center)

ABQ (Palomas Landing Retirement Community)



Left Photo: The Barelas Senior Center continued its tradition of paying tribute to the men and women who have served our nation at its annual Veteran’s Garden Ceremony on November 10. Volunteers once again spruced up a special area of the center’s garden dedicated to veterans. (photo courtesy: Patrick Turrieta)

Right Photo: On Veterans Day, American Legion Post 69 Auxiliary members performed a flag-fold ceremony at the Palomas Landing Retirement Community. India Archer and Mary Lou Lopez read the meaning of the 13 folds, while Auxiliary Junior Member Leah Apodaca folded the flag. (photo courtesy: Mary Lou Lopez)

Corrales (Sandoval County)



Left Photo: In Corrales, VFW Post 5432 and members of Boy Scouts of America Troop 703 gave out “buddy poppies” and American flags at the Walmart on Coors Bypass. Though the flags and poppies were free, most store patrons gave cash donations—which were then given to veterans organizations and to needy children and their families in Corrales.

Right Photo: VFW Post 5432 members Bill Martin (left) and Zack Furlow pause for a photo while handing out buddy poppies and American flags. (Both photos courtesy: Terry Brown/VFW Post 5432 Commander)

Hurley (Grant County)



Hurley Elementary School held its annual Veterans Day assembly to teach the schoolkids the history and value of our nation’s military branches. School Principal LaVerne Martinez (left photo, with student Ezekiel Morales) and staff led the kids in singing several service branch and patriotic songs (right photo) —inviting those in attendance to sing along. (photos courtesy: Dennis Campos/VA Disabled Veteran Outreach Program-SW New Mexico)

Las Cruces (Camino Real Middle School)



The student council of Camino Real Middle School presented checks of \$1,000 each to VFW Post 10124 and the Veterans Transition Center. In an effort to bring awareness to the 22 veterans a day who succumb to suicide, the council sponsored a pledge drive—promising to walk one mile a day beginning October 18. The drive culminated with a walk to the city’s Veterans Memorial Park. *(photos courtesy: Karen Woods/United Military Women of the Southwest)*

Mora



Veterans from Mora County were honored at a Veterans Day ceremony at Mora High School. *(photos courtesy: Jim Cassidy/Mora County Air Force Veteran)*

Newcomb (Grant County)



The VFW Post 9517 Color Guard posted the Colors at Newcomb High School's annual Veterans Day ceremony. (photo courtesy: Tommy Sandman/VFW Post 9517)

Portales



Blue Star Mothers from Roosevelt County were honored at the Veterans Day Ceremony hosted by American Legion Post 31. (photo courtesy: Randy Dunson/American Legion Post 31)

Santa Fe (Veterans Memorial)



Veterans from American Legion Post 1 and VFW Post 12 replaced the weather-beaten American, New Mexico, and POW flags at the Santa Fe Veterans Memorial (photo courtesy: Jose L. Villegas/ State Defense Force Chaplain)

Santa Fe (downtown Plaza)



The Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra gave a free Veterans Day Concert at the downtown Santa Fe Plaza bandstand. (photo courtesy: Jeff George/DVS State Benefits Bureau Chief)

Santa Rosa



Veterans Day was commemorated at the Guadalupe County David J. Flores Veterans Center in Santa Rosa. A flag-fold was performed by Veteran Center Coordinator Andrew "Monk Sanchez, Malcomb "Doc" Foster, Adrien Soliz, and Willy Griego. *(photo courtesy: Willy Griego)*

Taos Pueblo



Left Photo: At Taos Pueblo, U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-New Mexico) received a plaque from Taos Pueblo Governor Clyde Romero and War Chief Fred Romero as a token of appreciation for his work on behalf of Taos Pueblo veterans and citizens.

Right Photo: Senator Lujan with Francis Cordova, who was also honored at the ceremony for his work on behalf of veterans and their families. *(photos courtesy: Carmela Quintana/field representative for Sen. Ben Ray Lujan)*

Washington, D.C.

In Washington, D.C., Native American veterans from across the nation gathered for a Veterans Day dedication of the National Museum of the American Indian's National Native American Veterans Memorial. It was designed by artist Tim Pratt, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. Though completed in 2020, the COVID pandemic prevented a dedication. Native American veterans from New Mexico were among those who made it to the official dedication this year.



Upper left photo: Acoma Pueblo U.S. Army Vietnam War combat veteran Tim Chavez proudly carried an Acoma Pueblo banner on the procession to the memorial. He was helped by retired New York Army National Guard Capt. Annette Skye, (center), and current USAF Sr. Master Sgt. Deann Louis Gallegos.

Upper right photo: Artist and designer of the memorial Tim Pratt (left/in blue suit) and Acoma Pueblo Vietnam War Army veteran Tim Chavez stand in front of the memorial designed by Pratt. (photos courtesy: Tim Chavez)



Above two photos: Members of the Upper Fruitland (San Juan County) Navajo Nation Color Guard also proudly carried a banner representing their organization during the procession. (photos courtesy: Alvis Kee/Coordinator, Upper Fruitland Color & Honor Guards)



Members of the Zuni Veterans Program proudly represented Zuni Pueblo at the ceremony—also taking part in the procession to the dedication ceremony. The National Native American Veterans Memorial is located just a few blocks west of the Capitol Reflecting Pool and the U.S. Capitol. (photos on this page courtesy: Angela Waseta/Zuni Pueblo Veterans Service Officer & Outreach Worker)



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.

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

**JOIN US FOR THE LAST
WOMEN VETERANS' FOCUS
GROUP OF 2022.**

**WE WANT TO HEAR WHAT
OUR WOMEN VETERANS
WANT! WE WILL BE
DISCUSSING OPTIONS FOR
THE NEW MEXICO VA'S NEW
WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC.
DECEMBER 15TH AT 1:00 PM**

CALL-IN NUMBER

1-833-558-0712

PHONE CONFERENCE ID: 2762 662 6470

**QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT
CHELSEA CASEY**

CHELSEA.CASEY@VA.GOV

505-265-1711 EXT 4615

Peter Vigil

**THE ALL
STAR
BAND**

2023

HAPPY NEW YEAR



Santa Fe VFW

\$10 a person

\$15 couple

Price excludes
entry-posole-party
favors

307 MONTEZUMA
AVE, SANTA
FE, NM 87501

Pre ticket sales
Contact Gilbert Romero
505-216-4306

NEW YEARS EVE



9th Annual Not Forgotten Outreach Appreciation Week

JAN. 17-22, 2023 | TAOS SKI VALLEY



Join us for a winter getaway in the beautiful Sangre de Cristo mountains, home of Taos Ski Valley. In its 9th year, Not Forgotten Outreach has partnered with Taos for a week-long ski & snowboard adventure for Military families and individuals.

For More Details, please call 866.921.0364



Lift Tickets: \$50 *with \$3 per ticket benefiting Not Forgotten Outreach*

Lessons: *with \$2 per lesson benefiting NFO*

Children Lessons* (ages 6 to 13) from \$65 to \$90 per day

Adult Lessons (ages 14+) from \$75 to \$105 per day

Rental Gear:

50% off rentals and demo equipment at Taos Sports.

30% off Lodging at The Blake*

30% off Best Unrestricted Rate. May not be combined with any other offers. Offers subject to limited availability per day.

Savings available for active duty military, veterans, immediate family & Gold Star Families with appropriate ID.

** Advanced reservations required. All prices are subject to tax.*



Event Page:



Book Lodging:





News from the VA



VA to Launch New Easier-Accessible Life Insurance Program in January

On Jan. 1, 2023, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will open enrollment for Veterans Affairs Life Insurance—the first new VA life insurance program for veterans in more than 50 years and extending VA Life access to millions of veterans.

VA Life will provide up to \$40,000 of whole life insurance for all veterans, age 80 or under, with service-connected disabilities rated from 0-100%. Acceptance in the program is guaranteed, and no medical underwriting is required. It will also allow veterans to complete their application online, receive instant decisions, and perform self-service functions—including electronic payments and beneficiary updates.

“All Veterans deserve to know that their families will have financial support when they pass away,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “VA Life is a critical step toward making that goal a reality, helping VA provide more life insurance to more veterans than ever before in our nation’s history.”

VA Life will increase veteran access to life insurance in several ways:

- **There is no time limit to apply:** VA’s existing life insurance program for service-disabled veterans, [Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance](#), required most veterans to apply for insurance within 2 years of receiving their disability rating. VA Life has no such time constraint for veterans aged 80 and under.
- **There is no health requirement to apply:** Under S-DVI, veterans had to be in good health except for service-connected conditions. VA Life has no medical evaluation tied to it.
- **Veterans are eligible for more coverage than before:** Under S-DVI, most veterans could only receive up to \$10,000 of coverage. Under VA Life, all veterans are eligible for up to \$40,000 of coverage.

VA Life premium rates are competitive with, or better than, similar coverage available in the private sector, and \$40,000 of coverage is more coverage than other like products offered. The policy will build cash value after the first two years of coverage when the face value goes into effect. If a veteran passes away during this two-year waiting period, the named beneficiary will receive all premiums paid plus interest. Unlike S-DVI, veterans will not be able to get a waiver for their premiums.

VA currently serves nearly 6 million veterans, service members and their families with more than \$1.2 trillion of insurance. Veterans currently enrolled in S-DVI will have the option to keep their current coverage or switch to VALife. These veterans can apply for VALife at any time after Jan. 1, 2023; however, if they apply between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2025, they can also retain coverage under S-DVI during the two-year waiting period for the VALife death benefit to go into effect.

Veterans will no longer be able to apply for S-DVI after VA Life launches Jan. 1, 2023. However, eligible veterans still have the opportunity to [apply](#) for the program between now and Dec. 31, 2022. To learn more, visit [VALife](#). Information can also be found in the [final rule](#).

VA Now Prioritizing Benefits to Veterans With Cancer Covered by the PACT Act

VA has announced it will prioritize the processing of veterans' benefits claims for cancers associated with the [PACT Act](#). VA will expedite these claims to ensure veterans with cancer are getting timely access to the care and benefits they need and deserve.



The PACT Act added presumptions of service connection for more than [20 new conditions, including various cancers](#). These presumptions help Veterans get their earned benefits by reducing the evidence necessary for VA to find that a condition was caused by burn pits or other toxic exposures. They also simplify the claims process by eliminating the need to establish a link between the veteran's service and the claimed condition.

Since the PACT Act was signed into law August 10, veterans have filed nearly 125,000 PACT Act-related claims. Of those claims, nearly 14,000 are for cancers covered by the PACT Act.

“We are working hard to get benefits to all veterans who qualify under the PACT ACT as soon as possible, and veterans living with cancer are at particular risk,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “Expediting claims for these veterans will ensure that they get the care and benefits they need and so rightly deserve.”

In addition to prioritizing claims for veterans with cancer, VA will continue to prioritize the processing of claims for veterans with terminal illnesses and those experiencing homelessness.

VA will begin processing all PACT Act-related claims Jan 1, 2023. In anticipation of the surge in new claims, VA is hiring at 56 regional offices and 39 other special processing and call centers within the United States and Puerto Rico. [Learn about the positions and how to apply](#).

A Message From The New Mexico VA Health Care System About RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)



Across the nation, hospitals, emergency rooms and clinics are currently overwhelmed with patients with the *Respiratory Syncytial Virus* (RSV). RSV is a common virus that affects the lungs and breathing passages. It is most commonly seen in children and can cause severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalization, particularly in infants and in children with underlying lung issues or weakened immune systems. RSV can also be dangerous for certain adults—especially those 65 years of age and older, adults with chronic heart or lung disease, and anyone with weakened immune systems. Albuquerque-area hospitals have initiated an emergency response due to being above their capacity to care for patients requiring hospitalization due to RSV infection.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

When people are infected with RSV, they typically experience cold-like symptoms to include, but not limited to: A runny nose, sore throat, cough, and headache. Serious RSV infections can lead to pneumonia, difficulty breathing, and even congestive heart failure .

What can I do to prevent me or my family getting RSV infection?

Bacterial and viral germs such as RSV enter the body through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, and eyes. RSV can be picked up through contaminated surfaces that contact your hands, as well as respiratory secretions that directly land on the face. Steps to avoid acquiring (and transmitting) RSV infection as well as other upper respiratory tract infections include:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after contact with frequently touched surfaces such as toilets, doorknobs, elevator buttons, credit card machines, gas pumps and after using tissues to clean or clear respiratory secretions
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others
- Keep your hands off your face
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Wear a well-fitted surgical or procedural-style mask when in it is not possible to avoid close contact with sick people. In fact, VA-provided surgical or procedural masks are required in all VA buildings
- Clean and disinfect surfaces often, including frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and mobile devices
- Stay home when you are sick – unless you need to seek urgent and/or emergent medical attention
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands
- Seek out opportunities with telemedicine/virtual visits with your VA provider when not urgent and/or emergent.
- Avoid contact with children if you have a weakened immune system, lung or heart problems

Currently there are no vaccines to prevent infection with RSV. However, there are vaccines available for the flu and COVID that can prevent these respiratory infections, and are an important part of protecting those at risk for more complications. For more information on RSV, please visit www.cdc.gov/rsv . Thank you for choosing the VA.



DVS VSOs/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, (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/Southern NM

David Henley
411 10th Street #107
(575) 937-5620
david.henley@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque Metro Area

Dayle Bad Warrior
5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE/Suite 2
(505) 383-2400
dayle.badwarrior@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque Metro Area

Temporarily vacant. Please contact the other Albuquerque VSO for in-office assistance...or any other DVS VSO for phone/email help.

Albuquerque Metro Area

Temporarily vacant. Please contact the other Albuquerque VSO for in-office assistance...or any other DVS VSO for phone/email help.

Carlsbad/Southeast NM

Dagmar Youngberg
101 N. Halagueno
(575) 988-5900
dagmar.youngberg@dvs.nm.gov

Clovis/Eastern NM

Matt Barela
904 W. Sixth St.
(575) 825-9602
matthew.barela@dvs.nm.gov

Farmington/Northwest NM

Robert Guinn
San Juan College Vet Center/
Room 1715-B
(505) 327-2861
robert.guinn@dvs.nm.gov

Gallup/Western NM

John Livingston
908 E. Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A
(505) 389-8731
john.livingston@dvs.nm.gov

Grants/Western NM

April Ball
551 Washington Ave.
(505) 521-8132
april.ball@dvs.nm.gov

(more offices are listed on the next page)

Hobbs/Southeast NM

Fred Solis-Littlejohn
2120 North Alto St.
(575) 241-0714
fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov

Las Cruces/Southern NM

Miguel Martinez
2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782
miguel.martinez@dvs.nm.gov

Las Cruces/Southern NM

Vincent Tellez
2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782
vincent.tellez@dvs.nm.gov

Las Cruces/Southern NM

Clint Anderson
2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782
clint.anderson@dvs.nm.gov

Las Vegas, NM/Northeast NM

Martín Márquez
917 Douglas Ave.
(575) 520-5079
martin.marquez@dvs.nm.gov

Las Vegas/Northeast NM

Arturo Marlow
917 Douglas Ave.
(505) 331-8838
arturo.marlow@dvs.nm.gov

Rio Rancho/Central NM

Dustin Newsom
Sandoval County Administrative Bldg.
1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D, Room 2041
(505) 221-7190
dustin.newsom@dvs.nm.gov

Roswell/Southeast NM

Danielle Thompson
1600 SE Main St./Suite "A"
(575) 416-2284
danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov

Santa Fe/Northern NM

Nick McKenzie
Bataan Memorial Bldg/1st floor
407 Galisteo St./Room 134
(505) 218-3125
nicholas.mckenzie@dvs.nm.gov

Silver City/Southwest NM

Temporarily vacant. Please contact the DVS Las Cruces VSOs for in-office assistance. Or contact any other DVS VSO for phone/email help.

Taos/Northern NM

Leticia "Lety" Cano
Health & Human Services Bldg/
145 Roy Rd
(575) 709-5263
leticia.cano@dvs.nm.gov

Women Veterans Program	Pueblos/Tribal Liaison	Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)
Theresa Figueroa DVS Albuquerque Office 5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE/Suite 2 (505) 916-7449 theresa.figueroa@dvs.nm.gov	Beverly Charley San Juan College Veterans Center 4601 College Blvd./Room 1715-B (575) 241-3322 beverly.charley@dvs.nm.gov	Rich Coffel (Director) DVS Albuquerque Office 5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE/Suite 2 (505) 220-9932 richard.coffel@dvs.nm.gov

Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery	Ft. Stanton State Veterans Cemetery	Gallup State Veterans Cemetery
Randy Myklebust (Supervisor) 34 Country Club Rd. (505) 225-4341 randal.myklebust@dvs.nm.gov	Stephen McConnell (Supervisor) 1398 State Highway 220 (505) 383-4381 stephen.mcconnell@dvs.nm.gov	Gilbert Lopez (Supervisor) 333 National Cemetery Dr. (505) 905-9771 gilbert.lopez@dvs.nm.gov