

AUGUST 2022

The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.



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Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



So much has changed since 1782.

We have evolved from thirteen colonies to the singular most powerful nation in the world. We have formed an allyship with Britain, established a democratic government, and helped build foundations for new democracies to thrive.

But one thing has been constant: [the Purple Heart](#).

Originally dubbed the "Badge of Merit," George Washington created the accolade to honor "any singularly meritorious action." Only three (known) Revolutionary War soldiers received the award—a cloth purple heart worn

on the left side of the chest—until United States Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur renamed, redesigned, and reinstated the “Purple Heart” in 1932.

Today’s Purple Heart honors those who have been wounded or killed in action, criteria set forth by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II. Since 2014, Purple Heart Day has been officially observed on August 7 as a day to honor the estimated 1.8 million service members who have received Purple Hearts; 1.8 million Americans did not return to their family members the same, or at all, because they chose to protect all Americans—to protect us.

[Read Monica's full message.](#)

Around HPO

[Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Program Grant Awards](#)

Through SSVF, we’ve awarded \$431 million in grants to 258 non-profit organizations across the nation to help homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. These grants enable community organizations to provide outreach and case management assistance to Veterans, and help them access health care, financial planning, childcare, legal assistance, transportation, housing counseling and other services. [Learn more.](#)



[Korean era Veteran leaves behind a legacy of service](#)

Seven decades after William Nyman served heroically in North Korea, he began receiving services from VA’s homeless programs after finding himself in need of support. This unexpectedly gave him the opportunity to share his story – and to be nominated for a Purple Heart by his care team. [Read his story.](#)

[Ending Veteran Homelessness Podcast: Tiny Shelters and the Low-Barrier Revolution](#)

On this month’s Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episode, Chanin Santini of the VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System describes how Veteran requests for VA to host “tiny shelters” has evolved into a new care delivery model offering big potential. To listen to the full episode, [click here.](#)





[The PACT Act and Your VA Benefits](#)

The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.

Visit www.va.gov/PACT or call 1-800-My411 to learn more about what the PACT Act means for you, or to file a claim for PACT Act-related disability compensation.

[Veteran gets new home thanks to Habitat for Humanity of the Tri-State](#)

This month, Habitat for Humanity of the Tri-State became the first affiliate in the U.S. to dedicate a house with a Veteran whose HUD-VASH voucher will pay part, if not all, of their monthly mortgage payment. This was made possible through a new national Veteran Housing Pilot Program that allows HUD-VASH vouchers for rental housing to be used for homeownership as well. [Read the full story.](#)



[Recognizing the Potential for Homeless Program Staff Burnout and Methods Program Coordinators and Managers Use to Facilitate Supportive Environments](#)

On August 17 at 1:00 PM EDT, the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans (NCHAV) will host a live, virtual webinar that will provide an understanding of the areas in which healthcare staff reported feelings of burnout and provide strategies to assist staff in preventing and reducing burnout. [Click here to register.](#)

[Resource Roundup for Addressing Encampments](#)

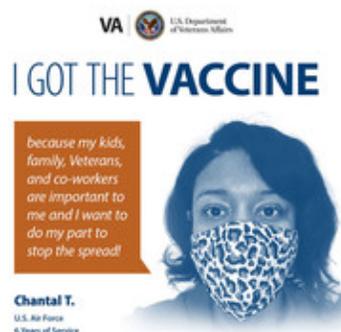
Communities across the United States are facing a crisis of unsheltered homelessness – which raises questions of how to address encampments effectively and humanely. [Click here](#) to see the list of resources that can help communities implement USICH’s 7 Principles for Addressing Encampments.



HPO COVID-19 Response and Updates

Accurate vaccine information is critical and can help stop common myths and rumors – but it can be difficult to know which sources of information you can trust. Learn how to find [credible vaccine information](#) from the CDC and read some [common myths and facts about COVID-19](#).

For information on getting your COVID-19 vaccine or booster through VA, [click here](#).



HPO Staff Spotlight: Heidi McCarty, LICSW



Heidi McCarty is a HUD-VASH Case Manager who has worked at the [Hershel “Woody” Williams VA Medical Center](#) for 15 years. Her days are filled with case management for Veterans, communication with community partners, and being prepared to change what she’s doing at a moment’s notice to help a Veteran in need. Her passion shines through as she explains how the work she does makes a positive impact on each Veteran she encounters.

“Working with the homeless population is very rewarding,” McCarty says. “I get to be the person that helps someone obtain a safe place to sleep at night, giving them the ability to fix themselves a hot meal, take a shower, and have a safe place to store food and clothing without fear of losing it. I could go on and on about the physical parts of helping Veterans secure housing.”

[Read more about McCarty’s position with VA](#) as well as her site’s role in developing a pilot with Habitat for Humanity to help HUD-VASH Veterans with homeownership.

HPO Fact of the Month

Did you know that VA’s Homeless Providers [Grant and Per Diem \(GPD\) Program](#) funds an estimated 600 agencies that provide more than 14,500 beds for eligible Veterans?

Through this program, state, local and tribal governments, and nonprofits receive capital grants and per diem payments to develop and operate transitional housing—including short-stay bridge housing—and/or service centers for Veterans who are homeless. [Click here](#) to learn more.

