



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Montana VA Health Care System

Community Invited to Join Montana VA to Walk for Health and in Support of Unsheltered Veterans in Helena

VA2K Event Take Place on Tuesday, May 9

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HELENA, Mont.—The Fort Harrison VA team is hosting a community Walk & Roll event takes place on May 9, beginning at 7:30 a.m. The annual VA2K event features a short two-kilometer walk and roll (1.24 miles) and encourages people to live active lifestyles and support Veterans who are unsheltered through voluntary donations of food and new clothing items.

The event is scheduled to run from 7:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and participants can join at two Helena-area locations. Participants can join at:

1. **Fort Harrison VA Medical Center Parade Grounds (3687 Veterans Drive, Fort Harrison, MT:**
 - a. The VA2K at the Fort Harrison VA Medical Center occurs from 7:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. at the Parade Grounds (outside the main entrance on the south side of the building). A VA health fair will simultaneously take place in the main lobby (near the Pharmacy). There will be live music throughout the day and participants are also invited to walk with our firefighters at 12pm!
2. **Prickly Pear Land Trust's Ten Mile Creek Park off Williams Street in Helena (1505 Williams Street) from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.**

In Montana, there was a 56.4% increase in Veterans who were homeless from 2021 (110) to 2022 (172). In 2022, Montana VA was able to help 211 Veterans secure housing. Unfortunately, it is anticipated that more Veterans and others in Montana's communities will experience homelessness in 2023 due to housing shortages and rising housing costs.

Resources exist to help Veterans secure housing. Some of these Montana VA resources include:

- Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to financial hardship, unemployment, addiction, depression, or transition from jail can contact the [Montana VA Homeless Program](#) at (406) 447-6144 or (406) 373-3927. Available support includes:
 - Immediate food and shelter, including both transitional and permanent housing,
 - Job training, life skills development, and education,
 - Support with justice system navigation and community re-entry from jail,
 - Financial support to prevent homelessness,
 - Treatment for addiction and depression, and
 - Health and dental care.
- Veterans may be eligible for financial housing assistance through the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing ([HUD-VASH](#)) program. The HUD-VASH

program combines Section 8 rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by Montana VA. These vouchers cover a percentage of a Veteran's rental costs. Most HUD-VASH participants rent from private landlords and partnerships with public and private housing providers is essential to the success of this program.

- Veterans experiencing homelessness can call also 877-4AID VET (or 877-424-3838) to connect with a trained VA staff member 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

One-third of Montana VA's HUD-VASH vouchers for Veterans remain unused by Montana landlords. If filled, these unused vouchers could represent stable housing for 187 Montana Veterans at risk for homelessness. Landlords who are interested in helping Veterans find stable housing through HUD-VASH vouchers can call (406) 447-6000 and ask for the Homeless Program to learn more.

Donations to support Montana Veterans who are unsheltered are welcome, but not required to participate in the VA2K. Donations can be made at [Pay.gov - VISN 19 Donation Form](#) (Under "Facility," select "Montana VA Health Care System." If a donor does purchase through the above link, the items will be shipped directly to Fort Harrison VA Medical Center.

For Veterans who live at the Fort Harrison VA's housing, donations of garden supplies are welcome. Specifically, bulbs/starter plants (seed potatoes, onion bulbs, beet, tomato, pepper, jalapeno, tomatoes, ad pepper plants) and seed packets (preferably organic) would be useful for new gardens.

Community groups who are interested in participating in the event should contact the local VA2K coordinator, Holly Alastra, 406-437-8712, holly.alastra@va.gov.

Montana VA Health Care System Montana VA serves over 47,000 enrolled Veterans across Montana—an area roughly 147,000 square miles in size. Veterans are cared for by a staff of 1,400 at 18 sites of care across the state. One third of Montana VA employees are Veterans.

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