

WASHINGTON STATE
DEPARTMENT OF

**VETERANS
AFFAIRS**



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"Serving Those Who Served"

VETERAN VOICES

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The Washington State Veterans Cemetery held a Veterans Memorial Tribute on February 24, 2016 to honor all those who did not previously receive military funeral honors.

The names of those being honored were read at the event and military funeral honors was rendered by the Army National Guard and Fairchild Air Force Base Honor Guard.

We would also like to thank the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, members of VFW Post 51 & the Inland Empire Chapter 879, Vietnam Veterans of America for all of their assistance throughout the year and during this event.

For more information on the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, please contact them at cemetery@dva.wa.gov

WDVA Hot JOBS:

[Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner Lead](#)

[Construction Project Coordinator 3](#)

[Employment Track Program Specialist 5](#)

[Grounds and Nursery Services Specialist 2 \(B952\)](#)

[NURSING ASSISTANT Certified-Spokane Veterans Home \(S1050\)](#)

[Medical Director \(0074\)](#)

[Physician 3 \(Part-time or Full-time\) \(3052\)](#)

More Info: recruiters@dva.wa.gov

"Serving Those Who Served"

A Message from the Director Lourdes "Alfie" E. Alvarado-Ramos Alfie@dva.wa.gov



Washington State recognized for innovation in serving incarcerated veterans.

Partnership focuses on successful release and reintegration into communities.

I am excited to share that for the third consecutive year, Washington State has been recognized as a Pillar of Excellence by the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](http://www.va.gov) (VA). We received the award for an Innovative State Program for Incarcerated Veterans and was presented by VA Secretary Robert McDonald to the [Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs](http://www.dva.wa.gov) (WDVA) and the [Washington State Department of Corrections](http://www.doc.wa.gov) (DOC) for their collaborative work serving incarcerated veterans.

Approximately nine percent of the state's prison population are veterans and of those 65% have honorable or general under honorable discharges, making them potentially eligible for federal VA benefits. Twelve percent of the incarcerated veteran population entering prison are receiving disability or pension benefits and need to file paperwork with the federal VA to adjust these benefits during incarceration.

WDVA and DOC have partnered since 2010 to help incarcerated veterans understand the importance of self-identifying their veteran status to prevent overpayment of federal VA benefits, and in some cases to allow for a portion of their disability compensation to go to their family during incarceration.

Some of the things we accomplished through this initiative are:

- ⇒ **Intake Video, Brochure and Poster** - Shown to all offenders entering prison to highlight the importance of self-identifying veteran status. A [DOC website](#) is also available for family members with information and VA forms.
- ⇒ **Veteran Pods** - Units within several Washington State prisons that house only veterans who have earned the ability to be there. The State has dedicated veteran units at Stafford Creek Corrections Center, Coyote Ridge Corrections Center, and the Walla Walla Penitentiary.
- ⇒ **Veterans Reentry Mission Planning and Community Support Team** - Partnership with WestCare to assist veterans in creating a focused reentry plan to reduce recidivism and promote healthier communities.
- ⇒ **Service Dogs** - Stafford Creek Corrections Center Veteran Unit allows veteran offenders to train service dogs for veterans. A partnership with Brigadoon Dogs has made this program possible and it has resulted in nine service trained dogs.
- ⇒ **Veteran Service Centers** - Stafford Creek Corrections Center provides a monthly services clinic, coordinated by WDVA and DOC, which brings community providers to the prison to help veterans get connected with benefits prior to release.
- ⇒ **Community and Professional Partners** - Organizations such as [WestCare](#), [Northwest Justice Project](#), Goodwill Industries, Community Veteran Centers, and the Centers for Excellence provide individualized assistance to veterans once they enter the community.

While much work has been done, WDVA and DOC continue pursuing changes that will ensure veterans, who are in receipt of federal VA disability compensation or pension, do not end up with large overpayments of benefits while they are incarcerated. Veterans who are in receipt of VA benefits should be in a far better position to succeed as they exit the justice system; however, when their benefits aren't turned off during incarceration, veterans can be left with tens of thousands of dollars in overpaid benefits. This puts veterans at serious risk for homelessness at a time when their VA benefits should be there to help get them back on their feet. WDVA and DOC will continue working with our partners at the federal VA and our state and local justice systems to identify veterans and help file the required documents to suspend benefits during incarceration.

About the Pillars of Excellence:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs worked together to establish the Pillars of Excellence Awards to identify and formally recognize outstanding state programs that support or exemplify VA's strategic goals and priorities.

WDVA has previously received Pillars of Excellence for:

- ⇒ **2015 - Innovative State Programs: Washington State Transition Model**
- ⇒ **2014 - Increasing Access to VA Benefits and Services: WDVA/HCA Benefits Enhancement Program**
- ⇒ **2014 - Eliminating Veteran Homelessness by the end of 2015: Ending Veterans Homelessness in Washington State Program**

Yes Vets Campaign Launched in Central Washington



What is Yes Vets? Veteran Hiring Campaign created by HB 2040 during the 2015 Legislative Session. Washington State employers are recognized with a Yes Vets decal once they sign up & hire a veteran. Continued participation is recognized w/ annual year decals, displayed next to the Yes Vets decal.

How can employers participate? Sign up using the [Yes Vets application form](#); Or contact your nearest [Local Veterans Employment Representative](#).

Washington state is urging businesses to say “yes” to the state’s veterans when filling open positions. The YesVets pilot project will start in Klickitat, Kittitas, Skamania, and Yakima counties this month—and employers across the state may be able to participate by early summer.

Employers who hire a veteran will be recognized with a YesVets window decal they can display at their business to demonstrate support for America’s service members. They will be recognized each year with annual decals that can be displayed next to the YesVets decal.

Employers who wish to participate in the pilot project should visit <http://www.yesvets.org> to sign up.

Background Rep. Gina McCabe, R-Goldendale, developed the idea after she met with veterans early in the 2015 legislative session.

“I was surprised to learn these veterans were having difficulty finding jobs to support their families after leaving military service,” said McCabe, who owns several small businesses herself. “Serving in the military provides our veterans with a strong work ethic, a diverse skillset and the ability to work well in teams.”

McCabe sponsored House Bill 2040 to encourage businesses to hire veterans and to improve the veteran employment rate overall. The bill passed both legislative chambers and was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee in late April.

Yes Vets initiative Washington’s Employment Security Department, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Commerce worked together to turn McCabe’s vision into a pilot project—and they are expanding.

“Hiring a veteran is good for our state’s businesses and good for our country,” said Inslee, who has made improving veteran employment rates a primary goal for his administration.

“We hope Yes Vets will increase the number of veterans who find great jobs, and also encourage returning veterans to consider starting their own veteran-owned business,” said Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, director of the state’s Department of Veteran Affairs.

“We have skilled local veterans employment representatives in every community, helping our state’s veterans find great jobs every day,” said Dale Peinecke, Commissioner of the state’s Employment Security Department, a partner in the WorkSource system. “Veterans who come into our WorkSource offices work with staff who are also veterans and

who understand the skills and abilities they bring to the workforce.”



Various employers, chamber members, county officials & community members met in White Salmon on February 22, 2016 to officially launch the Yes Vets campaign in Central Washington.

Jermaine Kearsse Visits WA Soldiers Home in Orting



Residents at the Washington Soldiers Home in Orting were able to enjoy a visit from Seattle Seahawks Wide Receiver Jermaine Kearsse and his 15 to 1 Jermaine Kearsse Foundation. Kearsse brought with him BINGO items, music players, signed banners and more!

Military Kids Farming at Veterans Farm in Orting



During the Jermaine Kearsse visit last week to our Washington Soldiers Home in Orting and Veterans Farm in Orting, we encouraged a "Bring Your Kids to the Farm" volunteer working day and our military youth loved it!

VERG Outreach at Military Spouses Hiring Event

Washington Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG)

Purpose

The VERG exists to help integrate the experience, values, and knowledge of both veterans and service members in state employment. This Employee Resource Group supports former and active military personnel and their families through a system of comprehensive activities and developmental opportunities. The VERG has partnered with JBLM ACAP and increased the number of transitioning Service Members who are gaining state employment, supporting the Veteran's Fellowship Program, supporting NorthWest Edge, site visits with State Agencies, and co-sponsoring hiring events – 18 State Agencies were represented at Career Day!



Goals

Recruit veterans to state service through outreach and educational activities.

Retain veterans by providing a support structure, education, and career progression assistance

Recognize veterans by planning annual activities that honor their military and state service.

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/about-wdva/washington-veterans-employee-resource-group-verg>

The below link will take you to the **Washington State Transition Counsel website** that discusses partnerships between public and private organizations that enables every service member to successfully transition into civilian employment and career opportunities in Washington.

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/about-wdva/washington-state-military-transition-council-wsmtc>

Military Spouses Serve Too and our WDVA Recruiters had an opportunity on February 9 & 10 to network and recruit military spouses at the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Hiring Event on Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM). Hundreds of military spouses met with the WDVA recruiter to find out about WDVA employment opportunities. WDVA is a Washington Employer of Choice and this event was just one of many VERG outreach opportunities.

To find out more info on the VERG, please contact recruiters@dva.wa.gov



Upcoming Vietnam Veterans & Tribute Events

Eugene Greene, Sr. American Legion Post and Auxiliary Unit 48 presents



WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS

~Parade & Expo~




Parade Music Food Vet Expo

Join Us!



MARCH 30, 2016
12 Noon Parade
1-5pm Expo
Warm Springs, OR

***Registration Deadline: March 15th**



Veteran/Parade/Expo Registration:
www.wsala48.org or call (541) 460-8212



THE SPOKANE VETERANS OUTREACH CENTER
INVITES VIETNAM VETERANS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS
TO OUR
ANNUAL WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY
WE WILL BE COMMEMORATING
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM WAR
29 MARCH 2016, FROM 9AM TO 12PM
WITH A SHORT CEREMONY AND BRUNCH

Keeping The Promise
 13109 East Mirabeau Parkway
 Spokane Valley, WA 99216

VETERANS MEMORIAL SERVICE

They are not forgotten

Please join us as we properly pay respect to those who signed on the dotted line to serve and protect our country.



Early February, Joint Services Support – Family Programs, informed us there are 5, possibly more, unclaimed U.S. Veterans in Clark County. These Veterans have no spouse, next of kin, or contacts to host a proper ceremony. They've been unclaimed as far back as 2008.

Thursday, March 10, 2016 at 1:00pm
Armed Forces Reserve Center
15005 NE 65th Street
Vancouver, WA 98682

Hosted by
Vancouver Elks Lodge #823
WA State Elks Association Veterans Program

Reception following – food & beverage

For more information please contact: Elaine Paulson, Exalted Ruler @ 360-601-7619 or Elizabeth Johnston, Family Assistance Specialist @ 360-604-7303

Yakama Warriors Association

would like to invite you to Sarge Hubbard Park as we celebrate

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

Saturday, March 26, 2016
1:00 PM

Featured Speakers
Andy Post Navy Vietnam Veteran
Dwayne Drake Army Vietnam Veteran
Dieg Miller Former Vietnam Citizen

Full Military Honors will be performed
 Reception and Free Dinner will follow at
St. Michaels Episcopal Church
 Naches and Yakima Avenues
 Silent Auction Karaoke Music and Dance
Come out and honor the Vietnam Veterans on their day
Every one is welcome to come!!

Mardi Gras—WA Veterans Home in Retsil

Residents at the Washington Veterans Home in Retsil join in on the festivities for a Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras Celebration at the home. The Retsil Mardi Gras King & Queen had the opportunity to lead the big parade across the facility.



Gold Star License Plates Update



Attention Gold Star Widows and Widowers

The Washington State Legislature has authorized you to receive one Gold Star Plate and vehicle registration at no cost.

If you already have a Gold Star License Plate and would like to receive your vehicle registration at no cost, please send your name, mailing address and Gold Star License Plate Number to: communications@dva.wa.gov or call us at 1-800-562-0132 option '1'.

Gold Star License Plates are also available for other family members to purchase, visit us online at <http://www.dva.wa.gov/program/gold-star-plate> to learn more.

Veterans Conservation Corps Presents



UPCOMING PERMACULTURE CLASSES

VETS_CAFE

VETERANS ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING AND STUDY IN CONSERVATION, AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND ECOLOGY



All Classes to be held at Veterans Farm at Orting
(1301 Orting Kapowsin Hwy E, Orting, WA 98360)

26 February- Access to Land: Building Partnerships and securing Funding, Grants, 'Wish List' and Advancement Strategies.

March 5th- Chainsaw Maintenance and Safety Training + Log Milling: with the Granberg chainsaw mill. Milling logs which fell on the grounds of the Soldiers Home during a storm last fall.

March 19th- Building a 'tensegrity bridge' in the wetlands: This tensegrity bridge will be capable of holding several tons with 4x6 and 6x10 lumber milled from onsite logs. A great trail building and landscape design skill (conservation forestry and natural building)

March 26th- Building Bee Hives; setting bird and bat habitat out, etc. (forest gardening, integrated pest management, and natural building)

POC: Matthew West at MatthewWE@dva.wa.gov

*Open to all Veterans, Service Members & their families

www.dva.wa.gov/benefits/veterans-conservation-corps-program

#TheVeteransFarm

Massing of Colors Celebration at Stadium High School



As part of the celebration of George Washington's birthday, the Washington Army and Air National Guard, in conjunction with I Corps and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, participated in the Massing of the Colors ceremony at Stadium High School in Tacoma on February 21, 2016. Many military, veteran, civic and youth organizations presented their respective colors in an inspirational display of patriotism and honor to our nation. Photos by Sgt. Matthew Sissel, 122d PAOC, Washington National Guard



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  Call 1-360-725-2204 for more information!
www.dva.wa.gov
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"Serving Those Who Served"
Nursing Recruiting Event

Work at the Spokane Veterans Home!!!



Who: All Are Invited!!!
When: 9am-2pm, Thursday, March 31, 2016
Where: 222 E 5th Ave, Spokane, WA 99202 (Main Lobby)
Why: Fill Nursing Positions at Veterans Home
RSVP: recruiters@dva.wa.gov or 360-725-2204
**Light Refreshments will be available*
What to Do:
-Have a Loving, Caring Energy
-Bring Resume
-Dress in Professional Attire



 Spokane Veterans Home
REGISTER NOW:
Recruiters@dva.wa.gov

Celebrating at the Spokane Veterans Home

Valentines Day Celebration at the Home



Mardi Gras Celebration at the Home



Super Bowl Celebration at the Home



State Benefits

- Free Recording of Discharges
- Employment Preference/Assistance
- Educational Benefits/Assistance
- Reemployment & Layoff Rights
- Military Retirement Credit
- Special Veteran License Plates
- Reduced Fishing/Hunting License Fees
- State & National Park Passes
- Reduced Public Transportation Fees
- Medical Benefits for Dependents & Survivors
- Burial Benefits
- Death Pension
- Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Home Loan Guarantees*
- Veterans Assistance Fund

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"Serving Those Who Served"

WDVA Contracted VSO's

- African-American PTSD Group
- American Legion
- American Veterans
- Military Order of Purple Heart
- Nat'l Assoc. for Black Veterans
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Vietnam Veterans of America

State Programs

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Counseling
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project
- Veterans Estate Management Program
- State Veterans Homes (1-877-838-7787)

Call Toll Free: 1-800-562-2308 www.dva.wa.gov

Keep informed about upcoming Veteran events by checking our Calendar/Public Events Page often
<http://www.dva.wa.gov/calendar>

Have an event of interest to Veterans you want others to know about?
Send fliers and information to
communications@dva.wa.gov

WDVA Veteran Voices

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Veterans Voices is published every other month for Washington Veterans and all interested in news affecting veterans and their families.

View previous editions here:

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/about-wdva/brochures-and-newsletters>

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