MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SUCCESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

FY20

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

FY 2020 Annual Report
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

GILBERT MEYER, NAVY
Photo by: Petty Officer 3rd Class Diana Quinlan

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LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Larry Herke, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

On behalf of the more than 1,400 dedicated employees at the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), I am pleased to provide this annual report of our agency's activities over the last year.

Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) saw significant changes and challenges from its beginning to its end. While we started the fiscal year on a high note, receiving national recognition for excellence at the Preston State Veterans Cemetery, dedicating our third and newest State Veterans Cemetery in Duluth, and housing more than 500 homeless Veterans, the year took a dramatic turn with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic shortfalls and social justice issues. This year has tested our mettle, but MDVA has remained "open for business" and stayed true to the discipline, ethics and courage forged by military service to continue serving Minnesota Veterans.

For MDVA, the year's unprecedented turmoil yielded new relationships, business practices, safety procedures and methods for us to gain "strength through partnership." These strong collaborations formed the framework by which our team will approach the challenges Veterans may face next year.

The trials of FY 2020 brought forth meaningful advances in safely operating our Veteran Homes, effectively adopting working from home into daily operations, embracing innovations in telehealth, and accelerating environmentally sustainable practices across the organization. Of incredible importance, our agency seized the opportunity to link Minnesota Veterans with $2.1 million through 2,325 COVID-19 grants.

Throughout this annual report, the summary of our FY 2020 accomplishments and FY 2021 objectives are presented within the context of the MDVA strategic plan, our agency commitment to nest into and amplify Governor Walz' vision of One Minnesota throughout state government.

Even through these difficult times, your Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs team will continue to innovate and lead. Our priorities over the next year include ending Veteran homelessness, preventing Veteran suicide through our work with the Governor's Challenge team, and continuing to assist Veterans through all aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your unwavering support of Minnesota's Veterans.

"The COVID-19 pandemic, economic shortfalls and social justice issues tested our mettle, but true to the discipline, ethics and courage forged by military service, our Veterans set an example for all Minnesotans to follow.

WHO WE ARE

MISSION

Serving Minnesota Veterans, their dependents and survivors by connecting them with the federal and state care and benefits they have earned.

VISION

Fulfilling the needs of Minnesota Veterans and their families by providing innovative programs and services to maximize quality of life.

CORE VALUES

V Veterans first in our hearts, minds and actions.

E Excellence is our standard.

T Trust through results.

E Ethics is our cornerstone.

R Respect for service (past and present).

A Advocacy for care and services.

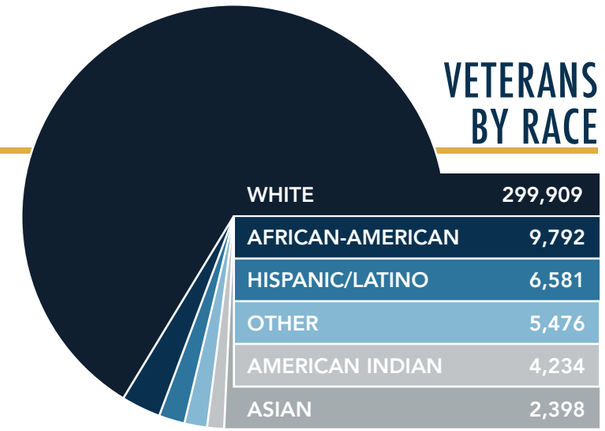
N Nation-leading services.

S Stewardship of resources.

We partner with federal, state and local agencies; non-profits, corporations and Veterans Service Organizations to ensure that the needs of Minnesota's Veterans are met.

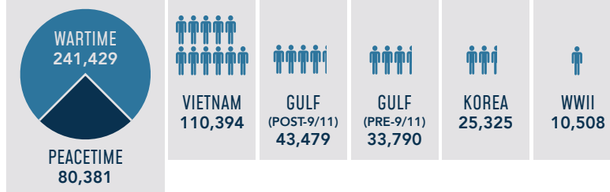
MINNESOTA'S VETERANS

VETERANS BY RACE

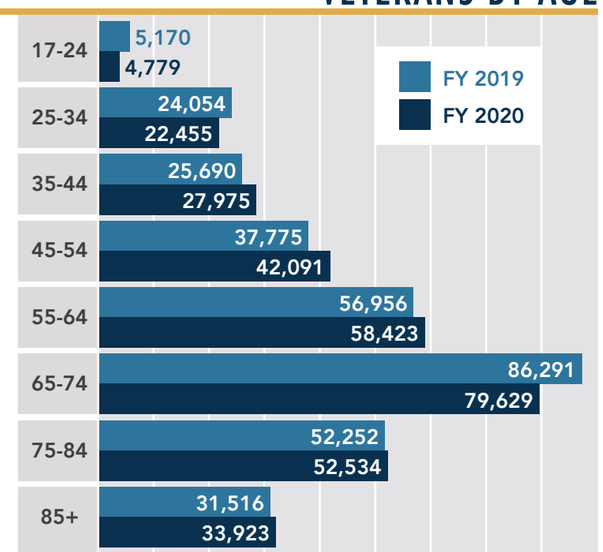


County Veterans Service Officers in each of Minnesota's 87 counties work directly with Veterans to assist them in obtaining the benefits they have earned through military service.

VETERANS BY ERA SERVED



VETERANS BY AGE



VETERANS BY COUNTY

AITKIN	1,623	ISANTI	2,675	PIPESTONE	583
ANOKA	20,317	ITASCA	3,957	POLK	1,985
BECKER	2,852	JACKSON	686	POPE	879
BELTRAMI	3,050	KANABEC	1,376	RAMSEY	25,174
BENTON	2,737	KANDIYOHI	2,566	RED LAKE	252
BIG STONE	408	KITTSON	312	REDWOOD	1,038
BLUE EARTH	3,989	KOOCHICHING	1,028	RENVILLE	986
BROWN	1,716	LAC QUI PARLE	504	RICE	3,526
CARLTON	2,771	LAKE	974	ROCK	572
CARVER	4,590	LAKE OF THE WOODS	305	ROSEAU	1,002
CASS	2,916	LESUEUR	1,762	ST. LOUIS	16,207
CHIPPEWA	832	LINCOLN	432	SCOTT	6,055
CHISAGO	3,653	LYON	1,442	SHERBURNE	5,789
CLAY	3,552	MCLEOD	2,504	SIBLEY	913
CLEARWATER	724	MAHNOMEN	309	STEARNS	9,722
COOK	413	MARSHALL	568	STEELE	2,279
COTTONWOOD	725	MARTIN	1,666	STEVENS	493
CROW WING	5,478	MEEKER	1,583	SWIFT	669
DAKOTA	25,519	MILLE LACS	2,142	TODD	1,996
DODGE	1,186	MORRISON	2,629	TRAVERSE	259
DOUGLAS	2,812	MOWER	2,565	WABASHA	1,636
FARIBAULT	1,043	MURRAY	605	WADENA	1,093
FILLMORE	1,470	NICOLLET	1,803	WASECA	1,160
FREEBORN	2,243	NOBLES	1,019	WASHINGTON	14,145
GOODHUE	3,229	NORMAN	441	WATONWAN	659
GRANT	429	OLMSTEAD	8,996	WILKIN	354
HENNEPIN	55,637	OTTER TAIL	4,440	WINONA	2,920
HOUSTON	1,362	PENNINGTON	936	WRIGHT	7,171
HUBBARD	1927	PINE	2,299	YELLOW MEDICINE	620

> **Within MDVA's 2020-2027 Strategic Plan there are four major priorities:**
>
> - *Create a seamless continuum of support for Minnesota Veterans*
> - *Increase Veteran awareness and participation in MDVA programs*
> - *Be exemplary stewards of all resources*
> - *Develop and retain our workforce*
>
> **In the short term, our focus areas within those priorities continue to be ending Veteran homelessness, preventing Veteran suicide, and providing high quality, safe healthcare for our Veterans and Residents in our State Veterans Homes throughout the span of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
>
> MIKE MCELHINEY | MDVA CHIEF OF STAFF

HIGHLIGHTS
2019-2020

Throughout FY 2020, the MDVA team connected with the Veterans we serve, their families and our stakeholders to maintain engagement with special events that acknowledged and celebrated our successes.

JULY

18 | AN END TO VETERAN HOMELESSNESS
Gov. Walz announces an end to Veteran homelessness in SE Minnesota.

23 | LEGISLATIVE LISTENING SESSION
State Legislators recapped the 2019 session at the Hastings Veterans Home noting bipartisan financial support for Veterans and successfully passed bills that will benefit Veterans and their families.

24 | VETERANS CAREER FAIR
More than 600 Veterans, active military members and their spouses joined 100 exhibitors for the 13th annual Veterans Career Fair.

AUGUST

12 | BRANCH OF SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK
The Minneapolis Veterans Home honored Residents during Branch of Service Recognition Week and celebrated with performances from local talent, fun activities and games, and fair food.

23 | MINNEAPOLIS HOME ANNUAL STATE FAIR EVENT
The Minneapolis Veterans Home hosted their 7th annual State Fair event for Residents, their families and community members.

23 | HEALTH UNIT COORDINATOR DAY
Health Unit Coordinators (HUCs) were celebrated for their commitment to our Veterans Home Residents and expert execution of the many functions that keep our Homes operating.

SEPTEMBER

8 | HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND HOUSEKEEPING WEEK
MDVA paused to thank those who keep our Minnesota Veterans Homes safe, welcoming and attractive for Residents, families and visitors.

15-21 | ADULT DAY SERVICES WEEK
This week honored the care, dignity and respect the MDVA Adult Day team takes in providing opportunities for adults who may be socially isolated find friends, enjoy meaningful activities and learn new skills.

15-21 | REHABILITATION WEEK
Minnesotans took time to honor the rehabilitation staff who patiently assist Veterans on their road to recovery.

21 | MINNESOTA STATE VETERANS CEMETERY- DULUTH DEDICATION CEREMONY
The State of Minnesota officially welcomed the third State Veterans Cemetery in Duluth. With dignitaries on hand to mark the occasion, generations of Minnesota Veterans and their families will be laid to rest at this beautiful new facility.

25-27 | COMMANDERS' TASK FORCE ANNUAL TRAINING
MDVA sponsored an intensive training session to inform the newly-elected members of Minnesota's congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organizations about best practices throughout the Veteran ecosystem.

MARTIN TORRES JR
ARMY
Photo by: Air Force Veteran Stacy Pearsall, Founder of Veterans Portrait Project

OCTOBER

1 | THREE PATHS PROGRAM
An event at the Hastings Veterans Home celebrated the Domiciliary program's new direction: One program, two sites and three paths, where we provide a supportive environment that fosters a stable, healthy and meaningful life for Veterans.

5 | VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION & AWARENESS DAY
The inaugural Veterans Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day was held at the North St. Paul Veterans Park.

10-15 | NEW VETERANS HOMES AWAIT FEDERAL FUNDING DECISION
With architectural designs nearly complete, the Federal funding application was submitted. Officials from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs visited Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston to provide an update to community stakeholders on the status of the proposed Minnesota Veterans Homes.

NOVEMBER

9 | COMMUNITY RELATIONS
MDVA sponsored the U of M Military and Veterans Appreciation Day football game.

11 | VETERANS DAY
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs honored MDVA's annual Veterans Day Program as the official regional event in 2019.

DECEMBER

7 | PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY
MDVA hosted a ceremony to honor and commemorate the 78th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

4 | MINNEAPOLIS VETERANS HOME EDUCATION CENTER RIBBON CUTTING
The new Education Center at the Minneapolis Veterans Home created new training space in the former Chapel and Auditorium in Building 15.

JANUARY

9 | MINNEAPOLIS VETERANS HOME HISTORIC TRUSS BRIDGE OPENING
After years of repairs and construction, the historic truss bridge at the Minneapolis Veterans Home was reopened, providing increased safety and convenience to Residents, their families and the community.

FEBRUARY

1-28 | FERGUS FALL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN
Using billboards and digital ads, MDVA crafted a campaign to recruit staff to assist Veterans at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home throughout the month of February.

MARCH

1-31 | SOCIAL WORKER MONTH
MDVA recognized the many tasks undertaken by social workers who enable Veterans and families to be successful in all aspects of their lives.

4 | GOVERNOR'S CHALLENGE
Minnesota joins Governor's Challenge to eliminate Veteran suicide.

11 | NATIONAL DIETITIAN DAY
MDVA dietitians were celebrated for their role in making Resident Veterans happy and healthy. The meals available to our Veteran Residents are important to their quality of life.

23-27 | HIM WEEK
A week to showcase how Health Information Management (HIM) staff play an important role in the lives of our Residents. HIM staff ensure that our Veterans Homes are well-run and successful.

> **We maintain strong relationships with stakeholders in all of Minnesota's 87 counties. MDVA has the privilege of connecting with and informing Veterans about how to access and take advantage of MDVA resources.**
>
> ANNE SONNEE | DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

MAY

6 | NATIONAL NURSES DAY
Minnesota Veterans Homes acknowledged the work of 278 nurses, who consistently go above and beyond, especially during COVID-19.

10-16 | MINNESOTA VETERANS HOMES WEEK
The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs chose to celebrate this important week as "Minnesota Veterans Homes Week." This is an annual opportunity to recognize our valued Veterans Healthcare staff for their hard work and dedication to caring for our Residents.

25 | MEMORIAL DAY
While COVID-19 prohibited in-person gatherings, MDVA coordinated a 30-minute "Virtual Memorial Day Program," with remembrances and official remarks. This Emmy Award-winning program aired on Twin Cities Public Television.

JUNE

14-20 | CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT WEEK
MDVA proudly celebrated National Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Week. Minnesota Veterans Home CNAs come to work every day ready and willing to "give their all" to ensure our Residents are happy and healthy.

ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

MDVA advances the mission of ending Veteran homelessness by working with partners to develop effective solutions on an individual level for at-risk Veterans and their families experiencing a housing crisis.

A UNIFIED TEAM EFFORT

The State of Minnesota took a big step forward in their pursuit to end Veteran homelessness statewide when Governor Tim Walz joined the River Valleys Continuum of Care (CoC) in July 2019 to announce the effective end of Veteran homelessness in Southeast Minnesota, as determined by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This made the River Valleys CoC the fifth of 10 jurisdictions in the state of Minnesota to do so.

> **Solving Veteran homelessness can provide a road-map to ending homelessness among all Minnesotans.**
>
> PAUL WILLIAMS
> HOMELESS PROGRAMS SUPERVISOR

EXPANDING SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

An important initiative over the last year was a deliberate outreach effort to landlords and property managers to expand the number of safe and affordable properties for Veterans on the Homeless Veteran Registry. MDVA coordinated the creation and administration of an incentive fund, a risk mitigation fund and a vacancy relief fund available to eligible landlords and property managers.

MDVA supported seven MACV Stand Downs throughout Minnesota in FY 2020. Stand Downs enable Veterans to gather and obtain important services and information. Last year, of the 1,652 Stand Downs attendees, 220 were Veterans experiencing homelessness.

COVID-19 ELEVATES HOUSING CRISIS

COVID-19 brought unique challenges to homeless Veterans. The immediate health and well-being of at-risk Veterans experiencing a housing crisis during COVID-19 was elevated as an agency-wide priority, with MDVA assisting in the placement of Veterans in hotels to maintain a socially distanced safe setting. The impact of financial assistance for at-risk and homeless Veterans was tremendous; in FY20 $537,745 was expended to house Veterans, and at-risk Minnesota Veterans received over $2 million in federal Social Security payments through MDVA's SOAR Program, which connects Veterans with SSI/SSDI benefits.

SOAR Connecting Veterans with Social Security Benefits — Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Funding Breakdown

- **Housing** $295,261
- **Property Manager Incentive Programming** $188,936
- **Utilities** $29,442
- **Independent Living** $23,482
- **Transportation** $624

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP — MACV Ending Veteran Homelessness — FEATURED PARTNER

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is one of many public and non-profit partners working with MDVA to end Veteran homelessness in Minnesota.

Homeless Veteran Registry

515	196	186	550
REGISTERED VETERANS	VETERANS WITH RECURRING HOMELESSNESS	VETERANS WITH A HOUSING PLAN	NUMBER OF VETERANS HOUSED

Homeless Veteran Population

HENNEPIN & RAMSEY	165
CENTRAL	32
ST. LOUIS	18
SUBURBAN METRO	11
SOUTHEAST	8
NORTHWEST	4
WEST CENTRAL	4
SOUTHWEST	2
NORTHEAST	1

Homeless Minnesota Veterans

FY 2019	FY 2020
240	245

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Pursuing sustainability goals often aligns with cost avoidance and quality of life improvements for Veterans and their families and being good stewards of funding provided to the agency.

MDVA'S collaborative team of diverse departments affect the success, accuracy and employee engagement of MDVA's sustainability efforts. The agency goals align with the overall State of Minnesota Enterprise Sustainability goals and are measured regularly. MDVA strives to increase awareness, heighten participation and improve our efforts throughout the organization.

FY 2020 Sustainability Results

The Hastings Veterans Home Sustainability Committee created ***more sustainable practices*** in the areas of fossil fuel consumption, solid waste reductions and procurement practices. The team was able to ***reduce fuel consumption*** in the first six months of FY 2020 by 23%. Additionally, the facility implemented a ***new recycling and waste program.***

23%
LOWER FUEL CONSUMPTION IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

The Minneapolis Veterans Home initiated a ***waste recycling program, installed electric vehicle charging stations and enhanced their composting efforts.***

The MDVA Education Division upgraded three vehicles to new ***hybrid models***.

The Luverne Veterans Home ***increased recycling output***, switched to compostable cups, bowls, plates, and napkins and ***installed four water bottle stations***.

Over the last year, the Silver Bay Veterans Home enhanced sustainability through ***installing Energy Star-rated triple glass windows***, installing a 25-yard self-contained solid waste compactor, decreased overall waste, increased recycling across all departments and focused on ***acquiring sustainable and reusable*** items.

> **"Our agency has developed a collaborative team due to the diverse departments that affect the success, accuracy and employee engagement of the MDVA's sustainability efforts. We strive for best-in-class sustainability practices in all of our operations.**
>
> MIKE JANDRO | FACILITIES MANAGEMENT OFFICER

The Healthcare Team replaced a facility vehicle with an ***electronic*** model.

The Claims and Field Operations Division transformed office operations by implementing usage of refillable pens, recycled paper and envelopes, recyclable powder toner for printers, and increased use of scanners to reduce printing. Additionally, ***printing reduction*** is enhanced by eliminating training binders in favor of secure thumb drives.

100%
IMPROVEMENT IN SUSTAINABILITY CVSO EDUCATION & TRAINING

Across MDVA, there has been a consistent reduction in the use of disposable cups, plates and plastic utensils.

Field Operations shifted all CVSO Education to ***virtual training*** providing more than 280 hours of training without travel or any other costs. Sustainability in FY 2020 improved by 100% in terms of CVSO education and training.

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP
V4V Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund
FEATURED PARTNER

The Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund is dedicated to assisting Minnesota Veterans by providing grants to improve the lives of Minnesota Veterans and their families.

Installed ***LED lighting*** at all State Veterans Home campuses.

Completed ***energy assessments*** with utility companies at Minneapolis and Hastings Veterans Homes.

Reduced waste with consistent bins and signage at Minneapolis, Luverne, Silver Bay and Fergus Falls Veterans Homes.

Minneapolis Veterans Home started a back-of-house ***organics recycling*** program.

Installed a new ***energy efficient*** chiller at the Luverne Veterans Home.

The Duluth State Veterans Cemetery implemented a 100% ***renewable energy source***.

Replaced numerous vehicles at the end of their life with more efficient, ***hybrid and fully electric vehicles***.

Awarded grant to replace gasoline-powered landscaping equipment with ***electric*** versions.

Increased E85 usage in ***flex-fuel*** vehicles by approximately 10% from 2018.

Added green space with ***native grass plantings*** at the Preston State Veterans Cemetery.

Initiated ***storm water reuse*** at the Duluth State Veterans Cemetery.

Installed 11 ***electric vehicle charging ports*** at four State Veterans Homes.

All laptops and desktop computers used by MDVA staff are ***registered as "Gold"*** as measured by the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool.

CLAIMS & FIELD OPERATIONS

Minnesota Military Radio showcases the stories of service members, Veterans and military families.

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP · MINNESOTA MILITARY RADIO · FEATURED PARTNER

Veteran Advocacy

MDVA is an essential advocate for Veterans by providing personal case development and tracking state and federal claims for benefits that Veterans have earned. The Claims and Field Operations team serves Veterans and their dependents from all social and economic backgrounds and have specialized outreach teams that work directly with women Veterans, Tribal Nations and Gold Star Families.

> "We owe it to our Veteran community to increase Veteran awareness of MDVA programs and services. If they know about us, we can help.
>
> BRAD LINDSAY
> DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In FY 2020, the Field Operations team focused on their core mission of providing professional-level representation to obtain benefits from Federal VA and State of Minnesota claims, reinforcing their reputation as one of the most educated and experienced advocates on a national level. They also provided professional education and training to Minnesota County Veterans Service Officers and – with the reality of COVID-19 -- adapted to changing environments both virtually and physically.

MORE THAN $1.3 BILLION IN PAYMENTS

The Claims staff demonstrated their adaptability during this uncertain time by coordinating more than $1.3 billion in compensation and pension payments for Minnesota Veterans and their survivors in FY 2020.

While the pandemic resulted in cancellations of in-person events, MDVA successfully transitioned many staff to working from home while providing seamless, uninterrupted professional service to Minnesota Veterans and their family members. Examples include documenting 630 contacts with women Veterans, Gold Star Family outreach, coordinating VA telehealth implementation with Tribal Nations and answering 783 County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) Hotline calls. Support to CVSOs was notable: the Field Office provided 280 hours of virtual training for CVSOs and the Claims Division extended hours to monitor incoming requests to CVSOs by Veterans.

Claims & Hearings

1,915 FY 2020 FEDERAL CLAIMS

326 FY 2020 STATE CLAIMS

192 VA APPEAL HEARINGS

2,200 FY 2019 TOTAL MDVA CLAIMS VETERANS + FAMILY

1,915 FY 2020 TOTAL MDVA CLAIMS VETERANS + FAMILY

Claims Activities

15,231 MAIL RECEIVED

20,550 PHONE CONTACTS

4,493 OFFICE VISITS

790 EVENT HOURS

BRENDA WHITE BULL
MARINE CORPS
Photo by: Air Force Veteran Stacy Pearsall, Founder of Veterans Portrait Project

INCREASING VETERAN AWARENESS

We increased Veteran awareness and participation in MDVA healthcare, programs and services.

Communications

The MDVA Communications team strives to help the agency build relationships and improve communications with strategic audiences, informing and promoting Veteran-related initiatives that support and further the organization's goals; in particular, the Commissioner's priorities of ending Veteran homelessness, preventing Veteran suicide and supporting Veterans through the COVID-19 pandemic. A key objective is strengthening relationships and increasing engagement with stakeholders and improving awareness of and participation in MDVA services.

TELLING THE STORIES OF MINNESOTA VETERANS: MINNESOTA MILITARY RADIO HOUR

An important partner for communicating MDVA items of interest is "Minnesota Military Radio," hosted by Vietnam Veteran Tom Lyons. Entering its 10th consecutive year on the air, the one-hour weekly program is a broadcast on a network of more than 60 stations and heard by an audience of 300,000. In FY 2020, the program consistently showcased MDVA priorities and hosted six special on-location broadcast events critical to Minnesota's Veteran community:

- **JULY 2019** - Garrison VFW Post 1816
- **AUGUST 2019** - 10th Annual MMFF Golf Classic
- **SEPTEMBER 2019** - MDVA Live Show at the Minnesota State Fair
- **OCTOBER 2019** - Commanders' Task Force from Federal Premium Ammunition
- **NOVEMBER 2019** - Veterans Day at Arlington National Cemetery
- **JANUARY 2020** - Armed Forces Service Center at MSP Airport Grand Opening

The MDVA website has proved to be a valuable tool in communicating to Veterans. In FY 2020, 188,427 unique website users absorbed 779,545 total page views. Each user viewed an average of 2.76 pages and stayed for more than two minutes. COVID-19 emphasized the importance of the website, as it was the primary source for gaining information on COVID financial relief for Veterans.

MDVA WEBSITE TOP PAGE VIEWS

114,137 COVID FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR VETERANS

28,489 DISASTER RELIEF GRANTS

20,661 MINNEAPOLIS VETERANS HOME

18,460 MDVA VETERANS HOMES

KEEPING MINNESOTANS INFORMED ABOUT MDVA

In a year that was not short on news, MDVA tracked an impressive total of 713 news articles, broadcast stories or radio mentions. Among the most prominent stories of the year were the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery - Duluth dedication, the inaugural Minnesota Veteran Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day, the Veterans Day Program, Pearl Harbor Day Program and COVID Relief Grants for Veterans.

Since COVID-19 disrupted normal Memorial Day activities, MDVA coordinated a first-ever "Virtual Memorial Day Program" in partnership with Twin Cities Public Television. This statewide broadcast integrated official remarks, greetings and imagery into a respectful tribute that honored Minnesota Veterans.

Key stakeholders and internal audiences were well-served by MDVA in FY 2020, and the agency, along with Triad Marketing and Advertising, Inc., was awarded the "Platinum Hermes Award" in recognition of the FY 2019 Annual Report.

STATE BENEFITS

State Benefits - Overview

Working closely with federal, state and community partners, MDVA state benefits supplement existing programs, as well as address the needs specific to Minnesota Veterans. In any given year, this enormous effort addresses immediate gaps in federal Veterans services by providing Minnesota Veterans and their families with compassionate resources to help with their mental, physical and financial needs until their crisis is resolved or long-term assistance can be acquired. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this responsibility was expertly carried out by the agile State Benefits Division.

COVID-19 RELIEF GRANTS

Special measures were put into place to assist Veterans affected by COVID-19. Veterans were invited to apply for a first-come, first-served "COVID-19 Disaster Relief Grant" in the amount of $1,000 or a "COVID-19 Special Needs Grant" for expenses owed to a vendor or creditor. These grants drove a 359% increase in the number of Veterans that applied for assistance over the previous year, and a 528% jump in first-time applicants. To process the deluge of more than 5,000 Disaster Relief applications, the Benefits team collaborated across the agency to surge available staff from eight to 60, all while performing these duties remotely from home. In FY 2020, MDVA coordinated $4.4 million in financial assistance to more than 6,200 Veterans through the existing State Soldiers Assistance Program, or SSAP.

LINKVET

MDVA's 1-888-LinkVet is a dedicated service for Veterans who are seeking information on any topic. Via phone or chat, dedicated experts are available to help. In FY 2020, LinkVet provided answers on a variety of items, including COVID-19, employment and family care.

State Soldier Assistance Program

5,924
TOTAL VETERANS SERVED

6,234
TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED

JEFFREY ADAMS
Photo by: Wounded Warrior Project

Minnesota Service CORE

(Casework, Outreach, Referral and Education)

CORE is a nation-leading program designed to bring essential, community-based services directly to Veterans and their families across Minnesota at no cost to them. Due to its unique structure, this program also provides resources to previously underserved areas in greater Minnesota.

By partnering with Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, CORE provides comprehensive assistance through their existing statewide network of resources. Services include individual and family counseling, financial counseling, debt management, addiction counseling, disability services and in-home counseling. The goal is to help Veterans and their families develop skills and draw on their own strengths to bring about successful and lasting family stability.

MORE THAN **700** VETERANS SOUGHT CORE ASSISTANCE IN FY 2020

SSAP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Dental - *1,171 served*
$827,469

Optical - *775 served*
$167,360

Special Needs - *490 served*
$1,188,500

HUD/VASH - *10 served*
$9,671

Subsistence - *112 served*
$74,919

Disaster Relief - *5,020 served*
$2,109,550

Education (Dependent) - *43 served*
$22,869

TOTAL FY 2020
$4,399,339

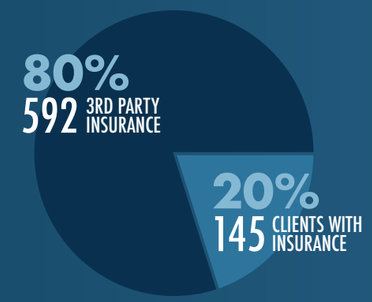
COUNSELING

CLIENTS SERVED: 737

VETERANS			530
WWII	5	VIETNAM	174
KOREAN	10	KOSOVO	7
GULF	72	OEF/OIF	304
PEACETIME	165		
SPOUSES SERVED			129
CHILDREN SERVED			76
TOTAL HOURS OF SERVICE			9,097
AVERAGE PER MONTH			758

FUNDING

TOTAL COLLECTED $114,000

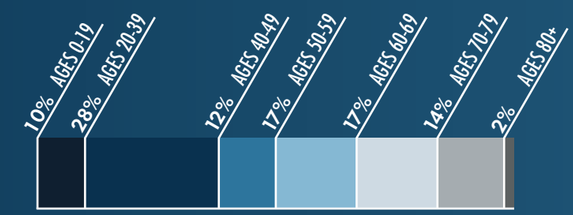


SATISFACTION RATING

	FY 2019	FY 2020
SERVICES HELPFUL	99	100
TREATED WITH RESPECT	99	100
WOULD USE AGAIN	99	96
WOULD RECOMMEND	97	96

AGES SERVED

TOTAL CLIENTS 737



SERVICE TYPE

SSAP BY COUNTY

AITKIN	$37,117	ITASCA	$104,114	POLK	$30,453
ANOKA	$127,419	JACKSON	$2,691	POPE	$17,610
BECKER	$61,745	KANABEC	$47,051	RAMSEY	$299,541
BELTRAMI	$44,725	KANDIYOHI	$36,009	RED LAKE	$0
BENTON	$32,211	KITTSON	$2,972	REDWOOD	$21,433
BIG STONE	$29,050	KOOCHICHING	$8,141	RENVILLE	$16,513
BLUE EARTH	$43,655	LAC QUI PARLE	$7,394	RICE	$34,626
BROWN	$44,180	LAKE	$7,000	ROCK	$0
CARLTON	$29,783	LAKE OF THE WOODS	$1,000	ROSEAU	$26,790
CARVER	$45,579	LESUEUR	$27,763	SCOTT	$72,274
CASS	$35,036	LINCOLN	$7,118	SHERBURNE	$112,973
CHIPPEWA	$4,325	LYON	$14,480	SIBLEY	$4,624
CHISAGO	$28,418	MAHNOMEN	$9,130	ST. LOUIS	$208,375
CLAY	$70,570	MARSHALL	$2,179	STEARNS	$227,728
CLEARWATER	$6,523	MARTIN	$9,822	STEELE	$14,815
COOK	$4,000	MCLEOD	$28,222	STEVENS	$3,189
COTTONWOOD	$30,415	MEEKER	$42,692	SWIFT	$23,736
CROW WING	$185,523	MILLE LACS	$57,922	TODD	$33,550
DAKOTA	$283,942	MORRISON	$54,594	TRAVERSE	$19,729
DODGE	$20,380	MOWER	$26,849	WABASHA	$11,707
DOUGLAS	$23,117	MURRAY	$538	WADENA	$23,912
FARIBAULT	$19,069	NICOLLET	$64,817	WASECA	$23,798
FILLMORE	$10,000	NOBLES	$4,000	WASHINGTON	$125,371
FREEBORN	$7,916	NORMAN	$7,215	WATONWAN	$4,678
GOODHUE	$27,839	OLMSTEAD	$107,365	WILKIN	$1,000
GRANT	$3,590	OTTER TAIL	$92,358	WINONA	$26,531
HENNEPIN	$423,335	PENNINGTON	$13,000	WRIGHT	$120,204
HOUSTON	$17,222	PINE	$34,779	YELLOW MEDICINE	$6,768
HUBBARD	$6,436	PIPESTONE	$1,000	MDVA FIELD OPS	$305,144
ISANTI	$34,033				

LINKVET INQUIRIES

4,604 PHONE CALLS RECEIVED

1,043 OUTBOUND CALLS

99% SERVICE CALLS RESOLVED

282 CALLS WITHOUT MERIT

2,478 WEB ONLINE CHATS

411 EMAIL INQUIRIES

8,536 TOTAL SERVED

+9% INCREASE FROM FY 2019

TOPICS OF INQUIRY

ASSISTANCE/FAMILIES 44%	HEALTH/DISABILITY 21%	EDUCATION 12%
HOMELESS REGISTRY 10%	VETERANS HOMES 4%	BURIALS 4%
EMPLOYMENT 2%	SOAR 2%	HOMELESS REGISTRY 1%

EXEMPLARY STEWARDS

We are exemplary stewards of natural resources, financial resources and technology resources to improve our service to Veterans and families.

As a Cabinet-Level Department, the MDVA Commissioner has a direct and consistent line of communication with the Governor's Office.

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP
FEATURED PARTNER

Grants

MDVA provides funding to our partners that assist in the goal of serving Veterans and their families. This funding is obtained by Legislative Grants and Support Our Troops Grants. Legislative Grants are funded by an allocation by the Minnesota State Legislature. In FY 2020, MDVA provided the following grants on behalf of Minnesota's Veterans:

COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER (CVSO) GRANTS

MDVA was awarded $1.1 million in funds from the Legislature and distributed $980,000 to all of Minnesota's 87 counties. More than $102,000 was invested in training for the CVSO team.

VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION (VSO) GRANTS

Nearly $459,000 was dispersed to enable the beneficial work of Minnesota VSOs. Last year, the distribution was $130,420 for the American Legion; $129,908 for the Veterans of Foreign Wars; $103,140 for Disabled American Veterans; $47,858 for Vietnam Veterans of America; $45,684 for Paralyzed Veterans of America and $1,848 for AMVETS.

MINNESOTA ASSISTANCE COUNCIL FOR VETERANS (MACV) GRANTS

MDVA supported MACV, the non-profit that coordinates with partners to end Veteran homelessness in Minnesota, with $750,000 for their operating costs and programming activities.

OTHER GRANTS

MDVA coordinated $100,000 for the Armed Forces Service Center at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. This investment assisted with the relocation of the facility to a more convenient location with enhanced services to traveling service members and their families.

CHARLES SHAY, ARMY
Photo by: Sgt. Dominique Washington

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS (SOT) GRANTS

Support Our Troops (SOT) Grants are funded by special revenue generated by license plate sales. In FY 2020, this program yielded $570,879. Last calendar year, SOT Grants were awarded as follows:

$174,700 VETERANS PROGRAMS

$225,900 VSO PROGRAMS

$50,000 MINNESOTA MILITARY RADIO HOUR

$9,450 SPECIAL FAST-TRACK GRANTS

Facilities

MDVA continued to invest in the longevity and functionality of our State Veterans Homes. In FY 2020, we completed 33 projects at a cost of $6.5 million. The completed projects, audits and studies across the Minneapolis, Luverne and Hastings Veterans Home campuses included improvements to HVAC, hot water systems, flooring, windows, fire systems and utility meters. These investments directly improved Resident care at these facilities by reducing electric or water outages, deterring future water intrusion and reducing emergency repairs.

FOUR NEW FACILITY PROGRAMS

An equally important investment in FY 2020 was the hiring of staff to focus on four new facility program areas for the agency:

- Continuity of operations
- Sustainability
- Electrical
- Plumbing

These positions have been essential in developing processes to streamline agency functions and more efficiently meet state and federal codes and standards.

ARTHUR FIEDLER
ARMY AIR FORCES & AIR FORCE
Photo by: Senior Airman Jordan Castelan

ONGOING PROGRAMS

In FY 2021, MDVA's ongoing projects include:

- Silver Bay Veterans Home - Replacing the HVAC system.
- Hastings Veterans Home - Improvements to the plumbing, HVAC, building repairs and paint.

A special emphasis on sustainability will be placed on energy metering and HVAC repairs at the Minneapolis Veterans Home, upgraded HVAC, central plant heating and chilling at the Hastings Veteran Home, new kitchen equipment and HVAC controls at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home, and HVAC controls, casework and a plumbing evaluation at the Luverne Veterans Home.

> **Minnesotans can count on MDVA in FY 2020 and beyond, as we align our efforts to add value across the diverse services we provide. We will continue to earn the trust our citizens have given us.**
>
> RON QUADE | DIRECTOR OF VETERAN SERVICES

DEVELOPING A QUALITY WORKFORCE

We develop, sustain and retain the quality of our workforce.

Investing in Employees

MDVA is passionate about investing in our employees, supervisors and managers so that they have the necessary skills to take care of our state's Veterans. We optimize our workforce by providing training that increases effectiveness and engagement and, whenever possible, cross-train teams so that our Veterans do not experience a shortfall. Human Resources staff promotes availability of myriad training opportunities - from SAVE Training intended to help prevent Veteran suicide, to adapting to working from a remote location.

Agency Staffing Levels

JOB FAMILY	# STAFF
ACCOUNTING / AUDIT / FINANCE	23
BUILDING / CONSTRUCTION	40
ECONOMIC SECURITY	1
EDUCATION AND TEACHING	1
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP	10
FACILITIES OPERATIONS / MAINTENANCE	122
FOOD / PERSONAL SERVICE	195
HUMAN RESOURCES	20
HUMAN SERVICES / DEVELOPMENT	445
INDUSTRIAL SAFETY	2
INSURANCE / BENEFITS	50
LAW	1
LOANS AND GRANTS	1
MANAGEMENT	18
MANUFACTURING / EQUIPMENT	10
MEDICAL / DENTAL / NURSING	311
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION	69
PLANNING / RESEARCH	6
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION	26
PSYCHOLOGY / COUNSELING	12
PUBLIC RELATIONS / MARKETING	3
PURCHASING / ADMIN SERVICES	2
REHABILITATION THERAPY	63
REVENUE	5
SUPPORTED WORK / SKILLS DEVELOP	1
TOTAL	1,437

VETERANS HOME	# STAFF	FT	PT
FERGUS FALLS VETERANS HOME	193	80	113
HASTINGS VETERANS HOME	84	69	15
LUVERNE VETERANS HOME	206	19	187
MINNEAPOLIS VETERANS HOME	606	385	221
MINNEAPOLIS VETERANS HOME ADULT DAY CENTER	10	7	3
SILVER BAY VETERANS HOME	144	71	73
VETERANS HEALTHCARE CENTRAL	34	31	3
TOTAL	1,437	816	621

DIVISION	# STAFF	FT	PT
PROGRAMS & SERVICES	103	99	4
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION	57	55	2
VETERANS HEALTHCARE CENTRAL	1,277	662	615
OFFICE & HOMES			
TOTAL	1,437	816	621

Safety

Beyond the protections that COVID-19 required for personal and institutional safety, MDVA was aggressive in FY 2020 in enhancing safety for both employees and Residents at the State Veterans Homes.

NEW SAFETY INITIATIVES

- Hazardous waste program at the Minneapolis Veterans Home Dental Clinic
- Healthcare Respiratory Protection program
- Streamlined pharmaceutical hazardous waste program
- Drug collection process

Other safety systematic improvements included hiring a new Business Continuity Administrator to ensure that unforeseen events do not cause disruption to our staff providing Veteran care. MDVA recognizes that in critical situations, speed matters, so the agency implemented a new mass communication system to swiftly get messages to the right people and ultimately keep our employees and Residents safe.

To continue improvements identified in the 2019 employee safety perception survey, a new safety program auditing process was developed and training was enhanced on reducing slip, trip, fall-related and overexertion injuries. Concurrently, work is ongoing to advance the existing MDVA workplace violence prevention program.

In FY 2020 MDVA made employees part of the solution, as it related to maintaining a safe workplace. The statewide safety initiative for employees of the state of Minnesota, MnSAFE, calculated MDVA's incident rate at a respectable 9.07. Of note, the agency exceeded our severity rate goal and reduced the total 6.58.

> **Our people are our most valuable asset. Taking care of Minnesota's Veterans requires a workforce that is passionate and focused. All members of the MDVA team strive to make our team strong.**
>
> DEB ALLEN
> DIRECTOR OF
> HUMAN RESOURCES

VETERAN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development partners closely with MDVA to ensure that all Veterans have access to education and employment.

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
FEATURED PARTNER

MDVA is committed to providing Veterans with a seamless transition from military service to sustainable civilian employment. This is accomplished through approved education and training programs that result in full-time careers paying a living wage.

Employment

MDVA is a resource for private businesses and public employers, assisting them in the hiring and training of Veterans.

The MDVA Education and Employment Team works closely with federal and state agencies, as well as employers and trade organizations to achieve our goals of having a Veteran unemployment rate under 4%, increasing licensing and certification awareness and integrating Veterans with the trade industry.

CONNIE BAPTISTE, ARMY
Photo by: I Am Not Invisible Project

FEDERAL GI BILL AND MINNESOTA GI BILL

MDVA embraces the fact that meaningful employment derives from quality education. The GI Bill allows Veterans to use their earned benefits to specifically gain on-the-job training and apprenticeships, license and certification testing, vocational training, as well as all certificate and degree levels of both public and private post-secondary education. In FY 2020, the State Approving Agency, or SAA, validated that Minnesota has improved quality education and training for Veterans by engaging with 3,161 programs at 371 private and public facilities statewide. In higher education, the GI Bill empowered 9,198 Minnesota students to access more than $110 million toward advancing their education. This is a direct result of 120 MDVA outreach events to an audience of more than 9,000 Veterans.

Separate from the Federal GI Bill, the Minnesota GI Bill aids eligible Minnesota Veterans, currently serving military, National Guard and Reserve members who served after Sept. 11, 2001, and their eligible spouse and children. The program provides a maximum benefit of $10,000, up to age 62.

In FY 2020, 1,876 Veterans, spouses or dependents accessed the Minnesota GI Bill for higher education ($1.8 million); apprenticeship or on-the-job training ($847,000); or licensing and certification ($88,000). Employers were eager to tap into the potential of Veterans, and in FY 2020 55 employers were incentivized by $126,000 to ensure that more than 800 Veteran apprenticeships were awarded.

FEDERAL GI BILL AND MINNESOTA GI BILL

In addition to serving as a liaison with the VA, national committees and various stakeholders, MDVA conducted six outreach events statewide to meet with community colleges, business leaders, trade and labor forums and DEED Workforce Centers for the purpose of educating employers about opportunities to partner and hire Veterans. Prominent among these outreach events was the July 2019 Veteran Career Fair, with more than 600 Veteran attendees engaging with 100 employers. The COVID-19 era necessitated three additional virtual career fairs.

JULY 2019 VETERAN CAREER FAIR
100 EMPLOYERS
600 VETERANS

IN FY 2020
8,057 REFERRALS
Referrals were made by the on-campus resource centers to assist student Veterans.

Unique to Minnesota, there are 76 on-campus resource centers that provide student Veterans enrollment assistance and opportunities for interaction and networking with other Veterans and their families, all in a dedicated, welcoming environment. In FY 2020, 8,057 referrals were made by the on-campus resource centers to assist student Veterans.

Proactive outreach activities by the MDVA Education and Employment team have generated referrals and interest at campus events, CVSO training and reintegration events. MDVA traveled to Ft. Hood, Texas in July 2019 to assist more than 700 Minnesota National Guard Soldiers returning from deployment with programs available to them.

MDVA is an advocate for those Veterans who wish to start their own business. In FY 2020, the agency confirmed that 163 more Veteran-owned businesses joined the ranks of Minnesota commerce. Additionally, MDVA guides Veterans and public employers through the Veterans Preference Act (VPA), a hiring practice that gives a limited preference to Veterans for public employment and protection against unfair termination. Last year, MDVA assisted 115 Veterans and spouses, 34 employers and 11 CVSOs on guidance on the VPA.

> **For Minnesota to continue to have thriving communities, we must embrace the power of Veterans who take advantage of the tremendous education and employment opportunities they have earned through their military service.**
>
> DAVE BELLEFEUILLE
> DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

FRANKIE PEREZ, ARMY
Photo by: Wounded Warrior Project

SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Veterans and their families are important members of communities around the state.

ONE MINNESOTA PLAN

MDVA supports the One Minnesota Plan and shares the desire to support thriving communities. Veterans and their families are important members of communities around the state. MDVA programs and services that support thriving communities include our efforts to effectively end Veteran homelessness by leading intergovernmental statewide collaborations that support the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness; plans to build three additional State Veterans Homes in greater Minnesota to care for our elderly Veterans; systems to promote and process Minnesota GI Bill funding for Veteran education; support for the Mission Act that allows broader access to VA Healthcare services in rural areas; and claims advocacy services that enable myriad benefits for deserving Veterans. MDVA strives to increase awareness of and participation in our programs and services to improve the quality of life for Minnesota Veterans and their families.

Overview | Veterans Homes

MDVA's four skilled nursing Veterans Homes and one domiciliary program at two sites as licensed Boarding Care faced unprecedented challenges in FY 2020. COVID-19 placed restrictions on and changed how visits by family and friends are conducted, altered staff interaction with Residents, and established multiple procedures to ensure both Resident and staff safety, while at the same time providing the high level of quality care that Residents deserve. This included an increased use of telehealth for physician appointments and iPads for Residents to stay connected to loved ones. The commitment, creativity and cooperation among staff, Residents and families were essential to provide a safe environment for all.

MDVA contributed to nationwide COVID-19 mitigation best practices in long-term facilities. The Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Heath jointly visited the Minneapolis Veterans Home in April and over three days observed first-hand the innovative procedures MDVA staff were employing to keep Residents safe during the pandemic.

We are proud of the contributions of the Minneapolis Veterans Home team in developing nationwide best practices in long-term care during the pandemic. Our state and nation are well-served by these talented professionals.

DOUGLAS HUGHES
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF VETERANS HEALTHCARE

PATRICE CHANDLER
ARMY
Photo by: Air Force Veteran Stacy Pearsall, Founder of Veterans Portrait Project

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon is a network of communities, companies and organizations united behind Minnesota service members, Veterans and military families.

SURVEY SATISFACTION RATING

Even with the operational challenges created by the pandemic, the respected Pinnacle Quality Insight survey found an overall satisfaction rating of 4.82 out of 5.0, and a "recommend to others" rating of 4.91 out of 5.0. Visit the MDVA website to see the entire survey results for all the facilities. These scores reflect the dedication of staff to continue to provide quality care, high leadership skills and stability of the staff in the Homes.

In the coming year, MDVA Veterans Homes will continue to maintain the high level of quality care, improve technology and expand programming and cross-home collaboration to apply best practices that benefit all Veterans in our care.

After years of repairs and construction, the historic truss bridge at the Minneapolis Veterans Home was reopened, providing increased safety and convenience to Residents, their families and the community.

Minneapolis Veterans Home

The Minneapolis Veterans Home is a 300-bed skilled nursing home located on 53 acres overlooking the Mississippi River. Veterans are cared for by 606 staff members highly regarded and rewarded in their profession: in 2019-20, the home received an 8.5 out of 10 overall satisfaction rating on the industry Pinnacle Survey, a 4.88 out of 5.0 on the US News and World Report Nursing Home Survey and were rated by the VA as 5.0 out of 5.0 for performance.

Over the last year, the Minneapolis Veterans Home celebrated the final construction of the restored Minneapolis truss bridge to link with essential services across the river, installed a security fence, added digital signage, made improvements to both the atrium and front desk, and opened an advanced Education Center in Building 15. With a grant from DAV, the Education Center purchased an automated simulation mannequin for both staff and students on campus to refresh and refine assessment and care skills.

During COVID-19 restrictions, the staff pressed forward by coordinating several new and innovative recreational opportunities for Residents, such as the 4th of July Parade of Vehicles and food trucks throughout the summer for staff.

SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Fergus Falls Veterans Home

The Fergus Falls Veterans Home is a beautiful 106-bed skilled nursing home located in Minnesota's lake country. One area of the facility is fashioned as a Veterans Village, where the rooms are stylized like individual homes and features an Old Town Main Street and is co-located with a VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic.

The long-tenured staff have a variety of backgrounds and have earned the facility a "Best In Class" Resident/Family selection in 15 of 15 Pinnacle Survey categories. While crafting disciplined COVID-19 safety procedures, the staff simultaneously initiated a Reduction Committee to reduce falls, alarms and anti-psychotic medication usage and continued the successful annual Safety Fair.

In addition to consistently recognizing Veterans during special events -- such as the oldest Resident's 102nd birthday -- 2020 ushered in physical improvements in Fergus Falls such as new parking lots, medication room renovations and Resident room flooring upgrades.

WALTER PRUIKSMA, ARMY
Photo by: Sgt. Audrey Hayes

Luverne Veterans Home

The Luverne Veterans Home is an 85-bed home with a 17-bed special care unit. Located in southwest Minnesota, the Luverne Home is renowned for its community support of Veterans, and surrounding area Residents enthusiastically volunteer and donate to the facility.

Overall, the Luverne team is long-tenured and has set the conditions for low annual staff turnover rates. The home boasts a 5-star Registered Nurse staffing rating by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, earned "Best In Class" customer ratings in 16 Pinnacle Survey categories, garnished the LeadingAge Minnesota "Safe Care for Seniors Award" and was bestowed the prestigious "Eli Pick Award" from the American College of Health Care Administrators.

The COVID-19 challenge ushered in refined telehealth processes, and the staff ensured that Residents were engaged with the annual Harvest Moon Ball, Scarecrow Festival and Classic Car Show.

A focus on continued training reinforces the facility's commitment to excellence in Resident care. All staff completed training on suicide prevention, and the Home Administrator graduated from the State of Minnesota Senior Leadership Institute.

SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Silver Bay Veterans Home

Silver Bay Veterans Home is an 83-bed facility located on Lake Superior. Rated as one of the nation's best nursing homes by US News and World Report, the facility has also been recognized in 15 Pinnacle Survey "Customer Experience Award" areas.

Two special care households focus on teaching support and engagement techniques, and amenities include a Resident workshop, four season porch, private dining and family areas.

In addition to implementing a COVID-19 infection prevention program, the staff advanced training last year in wound care, Hospice & Pain Management, Multi Data Set (MDS) certification, and Infection Prevention and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training. Though reduced due to COVID-19 restrictions, Silver Bay Residents enjoy a variety of outdoor activities such as fishing and boating on Lake Superior.

Domiciliary Program - Hastings Veterans Home & Minneapolis Site

The Hastings Veteran Home has 145 domiciliary beds in private and semi-private rooms and a small 50-bed facility on the Minneapolis Veterans Home campus. The 128-acre Hastings facility boasts nature trails, a biking path, an outdoor pavilion, a heated screened porch for year-round use, a horseshoe pit and much more.

The Domiciliary Program is a supportive environment that fosters a stable, healthy and meaningful life for Veterans. The Program offers three paths the Veterans can choose from, depending on their individual needs. The Fire Path is there for Veterans who may have experienced challenges in their life and are looking to successfully return to the community with skills in life coaching, vocational development, and managing their healthcare. The Water Path works with Veterans on their mental and chemical health needs and supports them in creating stability through individualized progressing goals. The Earth Path is here for Veterans who are choosing to make the Domiciliary Program their home while we support them in finding meaning in each day.

MINNEAPOLIS CAMPUS

Domiciliary Program Achievements

Over the last year, the facility was noted as "Deficiency Free" by the Minnesota Department of Health, and the staff implemented an improved admission process that decreases paperwork and reduces the admission wait time. Other staff initiatives include a Sobriety Support Program, a Resident Weight Loss Challenge, a Fall Prevention Program and completion of a yearlong Leadership Development Program.

Major updates to the Building 25 elevator, new curbs and asphalt are some of the notable improvements over the last year; additionally, a private donor coordinated upgrades to the Recreation Room. Resident engagement was enhanced by a special "Three Paths Program" kick-off event and visit by the Minnesota Twins Caravan.

Finally, the Hastings housekeeping and facilities staff led a facility-wide effort to create a COVID Care Unit (CCU) to keep Residents safe.

HASTINGS CAMPUS

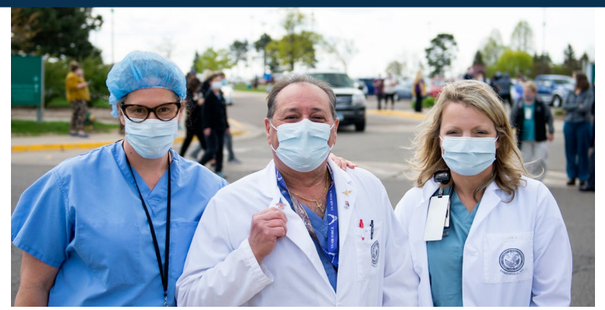
MAY ALM, ARMY
Photo by: I Am Not Invisible Project

CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT

We ensure a seamless continuum of support through collaborative relationships at a federal, state and community level that addresses the evolving needs of Veterans and their families.

> When a young person raises their hand to serve our nation, they enter a bond with society. In exchange for that selfless service, our country and our state have made promises to ensure that you and your dependents have the support you need for the rest of your life.
>
> ANDY GARVAIS | DIRECTOR OF VETERANS PROGRAMS AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

MDVA is committed to improve and advocate for the array of services that a Veteran requires after leaving military service. The MDVA team provides everything from employment services, housing and homelessness assistance, mental health referrals, suicide prevention services, adult day care, assisted living, transitional care, end-of-life care and State Veterans Cemeteries.



Adult Day Center

MDVA operates one of only two Adult Day Care Centers operated by a State Veterans Affairs department in the nation, located in Building 4 on the campus of the Minneapolis Veterans Home. Normally hosting 60 Veterans weekly at their scenic location near Minnehaha Falls, the highly trained staff assists Veterans with various forms of dementia. COVID-19 led to a change in programming in mid-March, but the dedicated team created a "virtual Vets Club" with activities, games and exercises for Veterans to do at home. Themed drive-through events enabled safe exchange of meals and activity packs. In addition, the dedicated Adult Day staff created a "Vets Club on the Road" program. This vehicle traveled to Clients' homes to distribute activity packs and healthy snacks, and to provide socialization and caregiver support. The Adult Day Center team was recognized for excellence by LeadingAge Minnesota with a "quality program award."

Healthcare

MDVA Healthcare professionals work throughout the Veterans Homes to ensure the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of Minnesota's Veteran Residents. Partnering with the Federal VA Healthcare System, MDVA collaborates with LeadingAge Minnesota, the National Association of State Veterans Homes and other organizations to innovate quality care. Even with pressing changes in due to COVID-19, the MDVA Healthcare team ramped up training on ethics, suicide prevention, hospice and palliative care, infection prevention protocols, pharmacy business practices, an oral healthcare initiative, as well as the Buddies Dementia program in Silver Bay and Luverne, and nursing assistant training and certification at various locations. Telehealth emerged as a vital tool to ensure that many federal VA appointments continued in a variety of specialty care areas. A robust Clinical Education Program continued with community education partnerships. These partnerships continue to aid all facilities with recruiting and retention efforts of staff.

Memorial Affairs

With locations in Little Falls, Preston and Duluth, MDVA State Veterans Cemeteries strive to be the nationwide model of excellence for burial and memorials for our Veterans and their families.

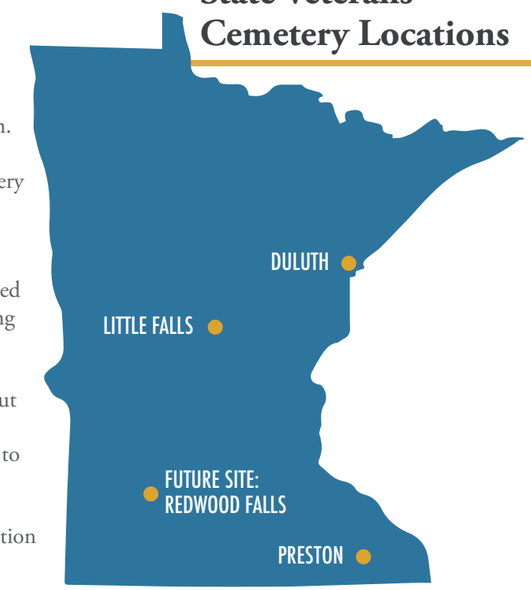
July 2019 - The National Cemetery Administration conducted a comprehensive compliance review at the State Veterans Cemetery in Preston. The Cemetery received 91 out of a possible 93 points achieving a 98% compliance percentage. This outstanding achievement resulted in the cemetery being recognized with the prestigious "Operational Award of Excellence" presented by the National Cemetery Administration.

September 2019 - The dedication of the Duluth Veterans Cemetery increased the capacity and geographical footprint of space available, ultimately enabling 726 Veterans and their dependents to be laid to rest.

COVID-19 restrictions forced a reduction of attendees at on-site services, but with social distancing MDVA was able to ensure that those laid to rest were treated with the dignity, honor and respect they had earned through service to our nation.

Looking ahead to 2020-2021, MDVA will seek federal funding for construction and development of a new State Veterans Cemetery in Redwood County.

State Veterans Cemetery Locations



Laid to Rest

	Little Falls	Preston	Duluth
LAID TO REST	457	112	157
VETERANS	292	81	132
DEPENDENTS	165	31	25
CASKET BURIALS	145	20	18
IN-GROUND CREMATION	190	63	66
COLUMBARIUMS	122	29	73
TOTAL SINCE ESTABLISHED	8,076	571	268

	Little Falls	Preston	Duluth
ESTABLISHED	1994	2015	2018
ACRES	39	169	104
STAFFING	9.5	6.75	6.75

VETERAN RICHARD MCCONNEL, MINNESOTA STATE VETERANS CEMETERY - LITTLE FALLS
Photo credit: Dave Schwarz, St. Cloud Times

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS & GOALS

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS | 2021 STRATEGIC GOALS

Veterans and their families are important members of communities around the state.

The Commanders' Task Force is comprised of the nine congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organizations in Minnesota.

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP · THE VOICE OF MINNESOTA VETERANS · CTF · FEATURED PARTNER

FY 2020 Accomplishments

2020 included one Regular Session and multiple Special Sessions of Minnesota's 91st Legislature. On May 27, 2020, Governor Tim Walz signed into law H.F. 2682 (Chapter 104 -- 2020 Regular Session) which included a $250,000 appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund to support the construction of the Minnesota Medal of Honor Memorial to be located at the Veterans Service Building on the Minnesota State Capitol Complex.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION FUNDING

A bipartisan agreement was reached by the Minnesota Legislature during the 2020 5th Special Session, which was convened from October 12-16, 2020, to pass an omnibus capital investment, supplemental budget and tax bill. H.F. 1 (Chapter 3 – 2020, 5th Special Session) was passed by the Minnesota House on October 14 by a vote of 100-34, and by the Senate the following day, with the support of 64 out of 67 Senators.

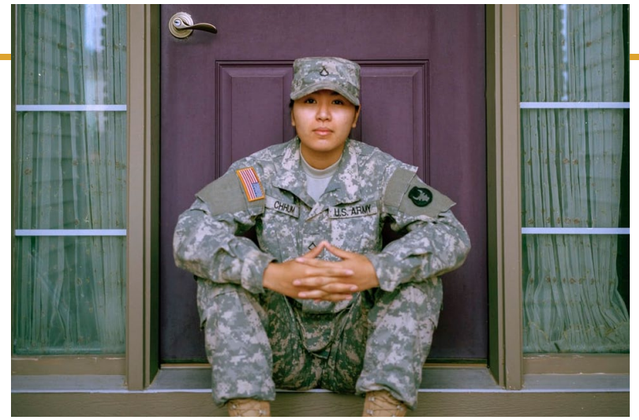
Veterans-related sections of H.F. 1 include infrastructure and construction funding:

- $6.3 million to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for asset preservation improvements at the Minnesota Veterans Homes in Fergus Falls, Hastings, Luverne, Minneapolis and Silver Bay, and the State Veterans Cemetery at Little Falls
- $100,000 to complete the construction of a greenhouse for Resident use at the Minnesota Veterans Home - Fergus Falls
- $350,000 for the Martin County Veterans Memorial
- $1 million to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the 32-mile Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail planned for Crow Wing and Morrison Counties between Brainerd and Little Falls
- $5 million for the Veterans Memorial Greenway in Dakota County. Funds are for improvements to the Veterans Memorial Greenway including memorials, a community gathering space and a new trail connection between Lebanon Hills Regional Park and the Mississippi River
- Additional asset preservation funding and funding for comprehensive campus safety and security upgrades at the Minnesota Veterans Homes in Fergus Falls, Hastings, Luverne, Minneapolis and Silver Bay

JOHN KRIESEL, ARMY

HOMESTEAD BENEFITS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES

Also benefiting the surviving spouses of disabled Veterans, the tax portion of H.F. 1 included a provision permitting a surviving spouse to continue to receive a homestead market value exclusion for a home of equal or lesser value to the property for which they initially received the exclusion. In practice, this will allow a surviving spouse of a deceased disabled Veteran the option to transfer their property tax benefit to a more affordable or easier to maintain home.



FY 2021 Objectives

In 2021, the 92nd Session of the Minnesota State Legislature will be primarily occupied with the work of developing the biennial state budget for fiscal years 2022-23. Governor Tim Walz will present his budget to the Legislature in January and will work with members of the House and Senate to develop a balanced budget as mandated by the Minnesota Constitution. Due to the impacts of the response to COVID-19, the State of Minnesota expects to be facing a significant budget shortfall.

EXPAND EFFORTS

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will work to secure an agency budget which will maintain programs and services operations aimed at supporting Minnesota's Veterans, their families and the communities in which they live, as well as targeted funding requests to broaden our efforts in the area of Veterans Suicide Prevention and Veterans Homelessness.

VETERANS HOMES

We are committed to continuing to provide the highest possible care to the Residents of our five State Veterans Homes. A key to this high-quality care is the retention and recruitment of healthcare providers, operations and support staff.

SUPPORT AND PURSUE STATUTORY CHANGES

Finally, the agency will continue to support and pursue provisions and statutory changes which will allow us to better serve Veterans using our Adult Day program, expand authority to offer enhanced dental care to the Residents of our Veterans Homes, or simply support Veterans using their Minnesota GI Bill benefit who are seeking to complete higher education, on-the-job training and apprenticeships, or professional licensure and certifications.

> "Even with the pandemic, economic downturn and social justice issues facing our elected officials, it is inspiring to see that taking care of our Veterans remains a priority for our federal, state and local leaders.
>
> BEN JOHNSON | DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

JESSICA SMITH-PLUMMER, ARMY
MARIANNE PLUMMER, ARMY
Photo by: I Am Not Invisible Project

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has built strong and collaborative relationships with diverse stakeholders and partners. We will continue to work closely with them to capture their passion, leadership and talents toward Veterans in fulfilling our mission of serving Minnesota Veterans and their families.

American Ex-Prisoners of War
American Legion
American Red Cross
American Veterans (AMVETS)
Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)
Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Network
Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County
County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs)
City of Minneapolis
City of St. Paul
Delta Dental
Disabled American Veterans
Every Third Saturday
Federal Department of Labor
Fort Snelling National Cemetery Memorial Rifle Squad
Freedom Flight Inc.
Hastings Police Department
Hearth Connection
HousingLink
iHeart Media
Jewish War Veterans
LeadingAge Minnesota
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS)
Marine Corps League
Military Action Group
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Minnesota Commanders' Task Force
Minnesota Department of Administration
MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development (DEED)
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota History Center
Minnesota Housing
Minnesota Humanities Center
Minnesota IT Services
Minnesota Judicial Branch
Minnesota National Guard
Minnesota Office of Higher Education
Minnesota Paralyzed Veterans of Minnesota
Minnesota State (MN State Colleges and Universities)
Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH)
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Centers
Minnesota's 10 Continuums of Care
Office of the Governor
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Pearl Harbor Survivors Association
PGA Hope
St. Catherine University
Social Security Administration
Southwest Continuum of Care (CoC)
State and Federal Elected Officials
Twin Cities Health Professionals
Twin Cities News Talk
Twin Cities Public Television
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
United Veterans Legislative Council
VA National Cemetery Administration
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)
Veterans Service Organizations
Vietnam Veterans of America
VISN 23 VA Midwest Health Care Network
Workforce Centers
Wreaths for the Fallen

> We are committed to ensuring Minnesota Veterans receive all benefits and services afforded to them under state and federal law.
>
> KRISTEN ROOT | GENERAL COUNSEL

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FISCAL YEAR 2020: JULY 2019 TO JUNE 2020

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has valued a strong relationship with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for more than 75 years.

STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP · DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS · UNITED STATES OF AMERICA · FEATURED PARTNER

Expenditures

TOTAL EXPENDITURES **$147,174,921**

VETERANS HOMES

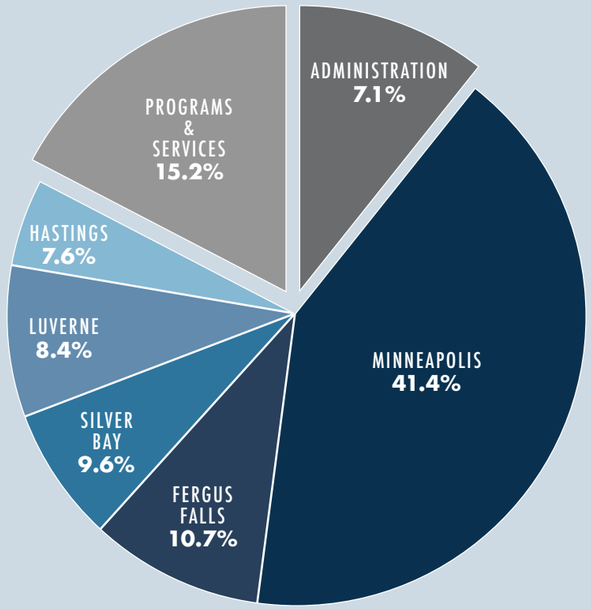
MINNEAPOLIS	$60,902,657 41.4%
FERGUS FALLS	$15,721,485 10.7%
SILVER BAY	$14,154,573 9.6%
LUVERNE	$12,468,687 8.4%
HASTINGS	$11,120,936 7.6%

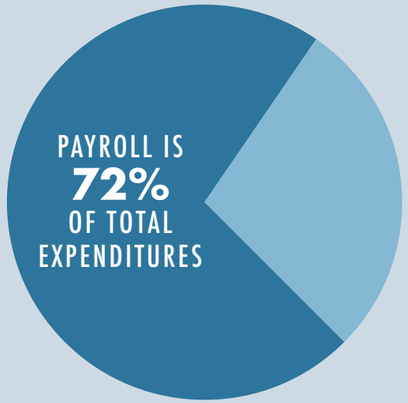
PROGRAMS & SERVICES

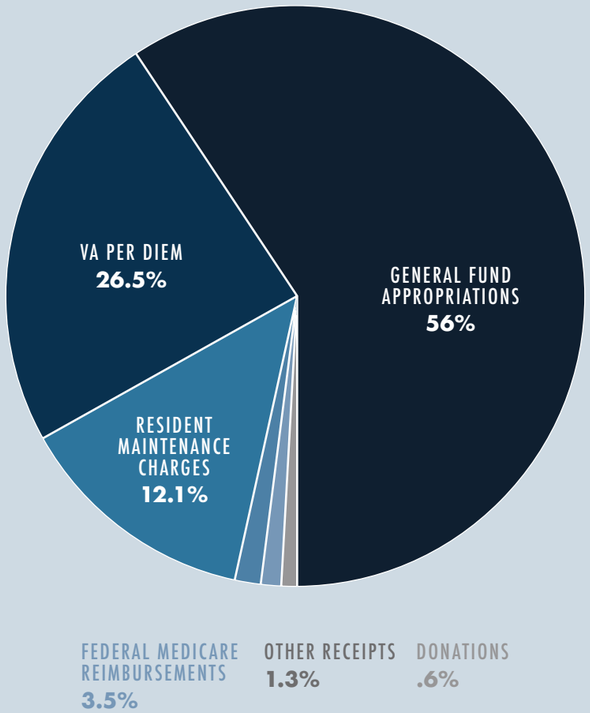
PROGRAMS & SERVICES	$22,400,403 15.2%

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATION	$10,406,180 7.1%







> "We are committed to fiscal accountability, remaining mission focused, understanding the constant and evolving needs of Minnesota Veterans, and smartly synchronizing all efforts into a strategic plan with achievable goals."
>
> JOHN POWERS | CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Capital Bonding Improvements

STATE CAPITAL BONDING TOTAL **$6,300,000**

*This funding will be used for major improvements to the five State Veterans Homes and three State Veterans Cemeteries.

Receipts

TOTAL RECEIPTS **$139,512,945**

GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION

GENERAL FUND TOTAL	$78,090,000 56%

HEALTHCARE $59,641,000 | PROGRAMS & SERVICES $18,449,000

FEDERAL VA PER DIEM REIMBURSEMENTS

HEALTHCARE TOTAL	$36,974,221 26.5%

RESIDENT MAINTENANCE CHARGES

HEALTHCARE TOTAL	$16,886,834 12.1%

FEDERAL MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT

HEALTHCARE TOTAL	$4,911,788 3.5%

OTHER REVENUE

OTHER REVENUE TOTAL	$1,863,719 1.3%

HEALTHCARE $324,273 | PROGRAMS & SERVICES $1,539,446

DONATIONS

DONATIONS TOTAL	$786,383 .6%

HEALTHCARE $756,801 | PROGRAMS & SERVICES $29,582

DO YOU KNOW OF A VETERAN WHO NEEDS HELP?

CALL
1-888-LINKVET

OR VISIT
MINNESOTAVETERAN.ORG

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs | 20 W 12th St., Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155
651- 296-2562 | MinnesotaVeteran.org