Fellow Minnesotans:

On behalf of the more than 1,500 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.

While Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) required continued focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, I’m proud that our dedicated team allowed MDVA to remain “open for business” to serve Minnesota Veterans and their families. Areas of particular focus included providing 4,720 COVID grants totaling $6.2 million to Veterans in need and adopting increased safety protocols in our five Minnesota Veterans Homes to protect the health of both Residents and staff.

Reflecting on this last year, I believe resilience played a major role in our successes. We did not allow the pandemic to deter us from our mission of “serving Minnesota Veterans, their dependents and survivors by connecting them with the federal and state care and benefits they have earned.”

As we share on the following pages, our work continued on many fronts, serving Veterans who have served from World War II to the Global War on Terrorism. From advocating on behalf of Veterans who have service-related health or disability impacts and supporting their education and employment goals to striving to end homelessness and prevent suicide among Minnesota Veterans, the MDVA has remained focused on our collective commitments.

Growth and progress also continued with expansions beginning in both our Minnesota Veterans Homes and State Veterans Cemeteries. These projects will allow us to better serve Veterans and their families across the entire state of Minnesota.

MDVA is also an employer and we strive to create a work environment that makes us among the best places to work. We believe there is nowhere more rewarding and fulfilling than a career serving our nation’s heroes. We are hiring and welcome anyone interested in supporting our mission to learn more at MinnesotaVeteran.org/Careers.

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

In resilience,
Larry Herke, Commissioner
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
Veterans first in our hearts, minds and actions.

Excellence is our standard.

Trust through results.

Ethics is our cornerstone.

Respect for service (past and present).

Advocacy for care and services.

Nation-leading services.

Stewardship of resources.

Joyce Johnson, a 100-year-old WWII Veteran, and Senior Airman Tyler Ahrendt, 133rd Air National Guard photo by Sgt. Luther C. Talks.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

The number of Continuums of Care (out of 10 total) that have effectively ended homelessness among Veterans is 3.

The goal percentage to reduce suicide among Minnesota Veterans by 2025 was 20.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

3 New Minnesota Veteran Homes under construction.

6 The number of Continuums of Care (out of 10 total) that have effectively ended homelessness among Veterans in their communities.

20 The goal percentage to reduce suicide among Minnesota Veterans by 2025.

1,468 Veterans were connected to potential employers.

1,540 MFM employees.

4,720 COVID-19 grants were approved.

22,000 Plots to be available at the new State Veterans Cemetery in Redwood Falls.

312,843 Minnesota Veterans.

The Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs partners with federal, state and local agencies, non-profits, corporations and Veterans Service Organizations to ensure the needs of Minnesota’s Veterans and their families are met. In FY 2021, Minnesota had 312,843 Veterans.

One of these partners, the County Veterans Service Officers (located in each of Minnesota’s 87 counties) works directly with Veterans to assist them and their families in obtaining the benefits they have earned through their military service.

FY 2021 ANNUAL REPORT
MINNESOTA’S GOAL IS TO BECOME THE 4TH STATE TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS.

During FY 2021, MDVA advanced this mission by working with partners to develop effective solutions on an individual level for at-risk Veterans and their families experiencing a housing crisis.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, MDVA partnered with property managers to secure safe and affordable housing for Veterans on our Homeless Veteran Registry. Our staff educated property managers and owners about the Homes for Veterans program that includes the Incentive Fund, Risk Mitigation Fund and Vacancy Relief Fund that increased their interest and confidence in providing housing options.

The good news: by June 30, 2021, six of 10 Minnesota Continuums of Care had effectively ended homelessness among Veterans in their areas. The challenge: the number of individual Veterans experiencing homelessness, mostly in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, had increased by nearly 10% from the year before. Together with our partners, MDVA remains committed to ending Veteran homelessness across the entire state.

During its 2021 session, the Minnesota Legislature approved funding to support MDVA’s efforts to decrease the homeless rate. This included $6.3 million to provide state-level resources, styled after the Federal HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers, primarily to help Veterans and former service members experiencing homelessness who are not eligible for federal resources.

On November 11, 2020, Governor Tim Walz and Rochelle Washington from the Suburban Metro Area Continuum of Care (SMAC) Governing Board, announced that five suburban metro area counties had effectively ended homelessness among Veterans. SMAC includes Anoka, Carver, Dakota, St. Croix and Washington counties.

By June 30, 2021, six of 10 Minnesota Continuums of Care had effectively ended homelessness among Veterans in their areas.

MINNESOTA’S CONTINUUM OF CARE REGIONS

- Northwest Minnesota: Homeless Veterans: 8
- West Central Minnesota: Homeless Veterans: 6
- Southwest Minnesota: Homeless Veterans: 1
- Southeast Minnesota: Homeless Veterans: 5
- Northeast Minnesota: Homeless Veterans: 3
- St. Louis County: Homeless Veterans: 14
- Central Minnesota: Homeless Veterans: 17
- Hennepin & Ramsey: Homeless Veterans: 206
- Suburban Metro Area: Homeless Veterans: 17

MinnesotaVeteran.org/HomelessRegistry

ENDING VETERANS HOMELESSNESS

FY21 Homeless Veterans: 277 • Average Age: 57
**SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS**

**MDVA SEEKS TO REDUCE VETERAN SUICIDE BY 20% NO LATER THAN 2025**

While no agency, organization or group has been able to eliminate Veteran death by suicide, MDVA seeks to reduce Veteran suicide by 20% no later than 2025, while ultimately ending Veteran suicide by 2035. MDVA is adding two full-time Veteran Suicide Prevention positions who will partner with the Minnesota Department of Health on the upcoming 2023 Minnesota Suicide Prevention Plan. MDVA also leads the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families by focusing on three priority areas:

1. Identifying service members, Veterans and families and screening them for suicide risk
2. Promoting connectedness and improving care transitions
3. Providing “lethal means” safety through initiatives like gun locks, safety planning and promotion of the Veteran Crisis Line

“Have you or a loved one ever served in the military?” MDVA is working with partners to develop a pilot program in non-Veteran hospitals to implement a new “Ask the Question” initiative. This will help to better identify service members, Veterans and family members with risk factors while connecting them with appropriate benefits and services.

Another priority of the last year was training staff and community stakeholders who serve Veterans. These partners include LinkVet, DEED, law enforcement, community Social Workers, Case Managers and Coordinators. Key trainings included “SAVE” (signs of suicide, asking about suicide, validation of feelings, and encouraging help) and “Mental Health First Aid” classes. In collaboration with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), MDVA also assisted with CALM (Counseling on Access to Lethal Means) training for providers who support service members, Veterans and families.

MDVA encourages all to explore resilience, military culture, suicide awareness and prevention educational opportunities through the training program PsychArmor.

Paul Jedlicka learned that it’s OK to ask for help when you need it.

After serving in the U.S. Navy as a operations specialist in the 1980s, Paul Jedlicka was medically discharged after an accident crushed his left elbow. Over time, Paul began to struggle. A lack of care for his mental illness and not knowing where to get help, he became homeless from 2003 to 2009. By 2010, he began medical treatment to improve his mental health, but he had also started drinking alcohol excessively, and the combination was not good. He attempted suicide twice.

Concerned for his welfare, his family brought him to the Minnesota Veterans Home in Hastings in April 2019.

Paul has experienced many improvements. His shaking has stopped, mental health symptoms decreased and his vision improved. He is now 11 years sober and credits this intervention and his faith in God for helping him adopt a mindset of motivation and resilience.

“If you can find things to focus on, you will get better,” he says.

At the Veterans Home, he participates in the work therapy program, helping in the kitchen and supporting the housekeeping team and is active as the commander of the Home’s 28-member AMVETS chapter.

“Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem,” said Paul. “It may be humbling, but it’s important to ask for help.”

MinnesotaVeteran.org/EndSuicide

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**Paul Jedlicka**

“**If you can find things to focus on, you will get better.**”

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**Minnesota State Veteran’s Crisis Line**

800.782.9566

VeteransCrisisLine.org

Facebook: Minnesota State Veteran’s Crisis Line
COVID-19 GRANTS

When the pandemic began, MDVA assisted Veterans by delivering fast and effective COVID-19 financial relief. In just a few months, MDVA staff processed nearly 7,500 COVID-19-related grant applications. More than $6.2 million dollars was awarded to Minnesota Veterans and their families.

The initiative offered three different grants:
• The COVID-19 Disaster Relief Grant provided $1,000 grant to individuals who experience negative financial impact from COVID-19.
• The COVID-19 Special Needs Grant provided up to $3,000 in financial assistance to cover expenses like utility bills, auto insurance, rent, mortgage and medical bills.
• The COVID-19 Distance Learning Support Grant provided a $3,000 grant to individuals with a negative financial impact from implementing or responding to their school district’s implementation of distance learning or hybrid model programs.

Grant recipient
In June 2020, Minnesota Veteran Jeff Sommerfield received a call from his employer informing him that his position had been terminated due to “unforeseeable business circumstances related to COVID-19.” He turned to his County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) in Wabasha County, who helped him determine the grants he was eligible for and start the application process. Initially he qualified for and received the COVID-19 Disaster Relief Grant. As luck would have it, no septic system needed to be repaired.

Jeff turned to his CVSO again, who helped him apply for the COVID-19 Special Needs Grant. He was approved and received this one-time financial assistance grant, which went directly to multiple vendors helping him pay one month’s mortgage, one month’s electric, vehicle insurance premiums and the second half of his property taxes.

To pay it forward, Jeff volunteered as a volunteer driver for Wabasha County Veteran Services, driving Veterans to medical appointments as a volunteer driver for Wabasha County Veteran Services, driving Veterans to medical appointments at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic created unique challenges to all areas of MDVA. Without exception, staff demonstrated resilience and put the Veterans they serve first and ensured that they and loved ones were well informed and not isolated.

The Minnesota Veteran Homes thoughtfully responded to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect both Residents and staff. The Homes attained some of the highest vaccination rates among long-term care facilities in the state. A proactive effort led to vaccination rates of 98% for Residents and 84% for staff at the Minneapolis Veterans Home, and an average of 60% in greater Minnesota Homes.

Critical to the Homes’ success in battling the pandemic was the collaboration among the agency’s infection preventivist, medical director, quality director and clinical director. The team went above and beyond to ensure that the response to community transmission and outbreak was closely monitored. Swift action was taken to reduce the risk of spread and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was in place. Residents, families and staff were educated on infection control protocols on a regular basis. This knowledge was reflected in the positive results and compliance from dozens of regulatory agency surveys that were completed throughout the pandemic.

The last two years have required tenacity, flexibility and creativity. The Minnesota Veteran Homes experienced three distinct outbreaks amongst Residents and staff within the five communities that resulted in high number of staff required to quarantine, all of which required the support of others in the agency. MDVA utilized a model of reassessments from Programs and Services, Central Office and other Homes to ensure Resident care needs were met and operations continued during periods of challenge. These staff demonstrated the total commitment that all staff in Minnesota Veterans Homes have to the mission of caring for Residents.

Their efforts did not go unnoticed. An April 2021 visit by Senator Amy Klobuchar to the Minneapolis Veterans Home called attention to the high quality of care in Veterans Homes.

MinnesotaVeterans.org/COVID
MDVA is building three new State Veterans Homes in the communities of Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston.

In Montevideo, the facility will enjoy panoramic views from its hilltop location that includes 54 Residential units. Hiring for the new homes will begin in late 2022 in preparation for an anticipated late 2023 opening.

MDVA leaders have worked closely with local officials and Veterans’ stakeholders. All three communities have been very engaged, donating land for the building sites and raising additional funds to support the projects. The approval of the state and federal funds has allowed us to move forward with construction.

“We appreciate the Minnesota Legislature’s steadfast support of our Veterans and these projects. The approval of the state and federal funds has allowed us to move forward with construction.” - MDVA Commissioner, Larry Merke

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

“We are focused on improvements that allowed staff to better listen and respond to the needs of Veterans and their families” - Kathy Rosendahl, daughter of James Netland, a Purple Heart Recipient

The Minnesota Veterans Home - Preston is a beautiful 106-bed skilled care facility located in Minnesota’s latte country. One area of the facility is fashioned as a Veterans Village that features Old Town Main Street, and Resident rooms are styled like individual homes. The Home is co-located with a VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic.

All I can say is that other nursing homes around homes in the state. I was told this was the best in the nation. My uncle is the Assistant Commander for the American Legion and he told me to bring him here. When we walked in the door that first day in January 2017, I knew it was the best decision. The staff have always given him the best possible care. I personally witnessed the staff going above and beyond the call of duty in his situation and they took me aside and reassured me that he was okay and said don’t worry to worry. When I went home, I knew he would be safe. Even during COVID, when I couldn’t visit, I was always informed and didn’t worry because he was at the Veterans Home, where I knew he was being taken care of. ” - Kathy Rosendahl, daughter of James Netland, a Purple Heart Recipient

The last year the Home’s quality program focused on improvements that allowed staff to better listen and respond to the needs of Veterans and their families. Recent updates to Resident rooms and the facility have included the installation of new LED lights, handrails, and digital controls for the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. The long-awaited greenhouse for Residents was funded with state and local funding, allowing Veterans an opportunity to grow their own produce. Despite COVID-19, the staff was resilient and hosted fun activities like a Veterans Day and Memorial Day program as well as the annual Safety Fair.
The Minnesota Veterans Home - Silver Bay offers a homelike environment with a view of Lake Superior. Four households in a lodge-like setting focus on the individual needs of each Resident. The Home has 83 beds, including two Memory Care households with life enrichment programs that focus on engagement techniques and interventions through Resident programming.

One thing COVID-19 did not impact was customer satisfaction and program expansions. The Home earned numerous Pinnacle Customer Experience Awards. They are engineering the HVAC system, which will make individual rooms more comfortable while reducing operating costs, ultimately keeping family costs of care contributions from increasing. The staff also added “Buddies Forever” Dementia education, a “Buddies Forever” Bathing class, a fall prevention initiative and a fit testing respiratory program. The Home also contracted with Lakeview Rehab for back-up therapy services, Moments Hospice and increased Telehealth.

In late 2020, after a high number of Silver Bay staff and Residents tested positive for COVID-19, MDVA staff were reassigned to provide clinical care to Residents. Thirty staff members responded from across MDVA’s team to assist at the Home. In an example of commitment and selflessness, one Licensed Practical Nurse left an evening shift at the Minneapolis Veterans Home and drove straight to Silver Bay to work the night shift.

“The Silver Bay Home staff welcomed me with – socially-distanced open arms – and put one right to work. My primary duties were to assist in the dietary and food service teams in the Maple neighborhood. Normally, meals are taken in a shared common room. Due to the pandemic’s needs, meals were delivered to the Resident’s room directly from the kitchenette. The Silver Bay Home staff have the utmost respect and care for their Residents. I wish more people could see what the Homes staff do for our Veterans, both in life, and at their leave this life.”

– Frank Shriver

Frank Shriver is a U.S. Navy Veteran and MDVA Veterans Programs Specialist who volunteered to assist at Silver Bay when help was needed.

The Minnesota Veterans Home - Luverne is an 85-bed skilled nursing facility, including a 17-bed Memory Care Unit. The long-tenured staff of 190 is made up of full-time, part-time and intermittent employees who all share a passion for caring for Veterans.

The Luverne Veterans Home boasts a 5-star overall staffing rating and a 5-star registered nurse staffing rating by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Home also received “Best in Class” customer ratings from the Pinnacle Customer Experience Surveys in all 16 categories. During the last year, a fall reduction program successfully reduced total falls across the Home. Lighting and painting updates were completed in Resident rooms and community areas, making these spaces more efficient and comfortable.

“The staff are the best, the food is great and the facility is clean. The staff loves our Veterans with respect, you couldn’t find a better place.”

– Pamela Muehle, Daughter of Veteran, Thomas St. Martin who served as a U.S. Navy Coxswain in WW2

Resident Teresa Dye, U.S. Air Force Vietnam Veteran who held the rank of staff Sergeant, and Resident Sherry, Minnesota Veterans Home - Luverne residence worker, help make the annual hot sauce.
The Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis is located on 53 acres overlooking the Mississippi River, adjacent to Wabon Park. Three skilled nursing buildings hold 100 beds each, all with private rooms and bathrooms.

With 606 staff in 27 departments, Minneapolis is the largest among the Minnesota Veterans Homes. The COVID-19 pandemic included attaining some of the highest Resident and staff vaccination rates among skilled nursing facilities in the state, with 98% for Residents and 84% for staff.

The Minneapolis Veterans Home has also continued to be recognized as a 5-star rated Home by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. To honor the legacy of service, a Branch of Service Medallion wall was also added at the campus North Entrance.

Affectationally called the “Vet’s Club”, the Minnesota Veterans Home Adult Day Center re-opened in February 2021 after an 11-month closure due to the pandemic. During the closure, the staff created a “Vet’s Club on the Road” program to ensure Veterans’ needs were met both socially and mentally. They also hosted themed drive-through events for Veterans and their caregivers. Since re-opening the Adult Day program, MDVA now covers the full transportation cost of Metro Mobility to Veterans who need a ride.

Setting New Goals
Army Veteran Marcus Johnson takes part in the “Work Therapy” program at Minnesota Veterans Home – Domiciliary Program in Minneapolis. He’s among the first faces for new Residents, as he serves as a Buddy for them.

“It’s a place to hang my hat. I don’t know where I would be if I hadn’t come here,” said Marcus.

From 1983 to 1987, this Minnesota native served as a Soldier in the Army. He gained a lot of experience, learned new skills and was able to travel. After service, he moved around to different jobs; he worked in a machine shop, at the airport, in landscaping and was able to travel. Eventually, he went through Rehabilitation at the St. Cloud VA. Liking at the Domiciliary Program, Marcus has grown resilient and developed a stronger bond with his family. He maintains his sobriety by connecting with other Veterans, participating in sobriety networks and attending AA Meetings.

The current goal is to regain his independence, with or without eyesight. His current goal is to regain his independence, with or without eyesight.
Pursuing sustainability goals often align with cost avoidance and quality of life improvements for Veterans and their families. Sustainability efforts are supported by a collaborative team across the agency. MDVA’s goals align with the overall State of Minnesota Enterprise Sustainability objectives. They are measured regularly as they strive to increase awareness, heighten participation and improve efforts throughout the organization.

During FY 2021, each Minnesota Veterans Home took steps toward their own unique sustainability. Fergus Falls is building a greenhouse for Residents for a “garden to table” nutrition program. In Hastings, Luverne, corn-based ice melt was used over the winter months to keep entrances clear. Minneapolis initiated a new paper recycling program. The Minneapolis Home also started a conversion to electric and hybrid vehicles. Meanwhile, Silver Bay purchased an electric club car and electric side-by-side vehicle. The Dormitory Program also started a HomeGrown Program where Residents are growing vegetables that are served at meals.

During FY 2021, MDVA competitively applied for and was awarded a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency grant to further support construction of a new cemetery in Redwood Falls. MDVA hosted a groundbreaking event in the fall of 2021. Construction is projected to be completed by fall of 2022 and a dedication event will be scheduled for May 2023.

MEMORIAL AFFAIRS AND CEMETERIES

The Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery – Redwood Falls will be the fourth State Veterans Cemetery in Minnesota. It will serve up to 12,000 Veterans, their spouses and eligible family members.

The process began more than a decade ago in May 2008, when Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed the capital investment bill that included a new State Veterans Cemetery in Redwood County. The search began for land and funding. Redwood County Commissioners entered into a purchase agreement with landowner Robert LeSage in 2014. The county acquired just over 63 acres of farmland from Robert and another four acres from a neighbor. Seeking to add to the aesthetics of the Cemetery, the county purchased an additional two acres of scenic land complete with a creek to surround the Cemetery’s south side with natural beauty. Over the next year, a task force was put in and the planning for the cemetery moved forward.

In FY 2021, the National Cemetery Administration awarded a Federal grant to MDVA to support construction of a new cemetery in Redwood Falls.

MDVA key goals and metrics for the coming year in the fall of 2021.

Construction is projected to be completed by fall of 2022 and a dedication event will be scheduled for May 2023.

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STRATEGIC PLAN

The goals and objectives will enhance the smooth delivery of programs, services, and care to Minnesota Veterans and their families.

STRATEGIC GOAL #1
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.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2
Increase Veteran awareness and participation in MDVA healthcare, programs, and services.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3
Be exemplary stewards of natural resources, financial resources, and technology resources to improve our service to Veterans and families.

STRATEGIC GOAL #4
Develop, sustain, and retain the quality of our workforce.

An opportunity for improvement is fully realizing the overall effectiveness and impact of MDVA. MDVA has a Strategic Plan that will act as a roadmap and guide the Department through the opportunities and challenges over the next years. The plan focuses on providing a continuum of support to Minnesota Veterans and families, increasing the Department’s visibility and relevance as a high-quality agency, practicing effective stewardship of resources, and growing and sustaining the quality of its workforce.

MDVA continues to execute its Strategic Plan, including the following four strategic goals:
EXEMPLARY STEWARDS

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

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VETERAN EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MDVA is committed to providing Veterans with a seamless transition from military service to sustainable civilian employment. Education and employment are recognized as critical components to Veterans’ homelessness. In response to the pandemic, the Education and Employment Team streamlined processes to reduce barriers for Veterans applying for school or work. They also worked to ensure that connected 1,468 Veterans with 625 employers looking to hire Veterans.

MDVA’s Higher Education Program continues to be a national model, serving colleges and universities throughout Minnesota with staff who help Veterans access education benefits. On-campus Veterans Resource Centers provide student veterans with enrollment assistance and opportunities for interaction and networking with Veteran peers.

MDVA is also a resource for private business 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 help Veterans to identify employment opportunities and assist with the transition to the workforce.

The Veterans Preference Act (VPA) provides Veterans a limited preference in awarding Minnesota state and local government contracts. This preference protects against unfair termination of a public employer or a service-disabled Veteran-owned small business that results in a reduction of 6% or more of the employer’s workforce and serves as a small business. MDVA also provides assistance and encourages small businesses to take advantage of this preference.

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**A Champion for Women’s Rights**

Brigadier Gen. Evelyn Patricia “Pat” Foote has been a champion for women’s rights in the military and beyond. She served from 1959 to 1989, rising to the rank of brigadier general in 1986, and holds many firsts for women in the U.S. Army.

Her service began at age 29 in the Women’s Army Corps, where she was just one of 28 women to hold positions of command. She served as a public affairs officer, a faculty member, and the first female Inspector General in the Army in 1986.

Following her retirement in 1989, Brig. Gen. Foote moved to Minnesota. However, retirement was not the end of her service. In 1996, she served as Vice Chair of the Secretary of the Army’s Senior Review Panel on Sexual Harassment. From 1998 to 2007, she served as president of the Alliance for National Defense, a non-profit organization that supports the role of women in the military services and demonstrated that commitment by speaking on behalf of women in the military. She has remained an active spokesperson concerning the role of women in the military.

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Her service began at age 29 in the Women’s Army Corps, where she was just one of 28 women to hold positions of command. She served as a public affairs officer, a faculty member, and the first female Inspector General in the Army in 1986.

Following her retirement in 1989, Brig. Gen. Foote moved to Minnesota. However, retirement was not the end of her service. In 1996, she served as Vice Chair of the Secretary of the Army’s Senior Review Panel on Sexual Harassment. From 1998 to 2007, she served as president of the Alliance for National Defense, a non-profit organization that supports the role of women in the military and demonstrated that commitment by speaking on behalf of women in the military. She has remained an active spokesperson concerning the role of women in the military. She has remained an active spokesperson concerning the role of women in the military.

MDVA outreach representatives advocated for Veterans in FY 2021 by providing personalized case development, seeking benefits and tracking 239 State and 815 Federal claims. They provided professional education and training to Minnesota County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO) while the resilient team adapted to the environment – both virtually and physically.

Field Operations focuses on three programs: Women Veterans, Gold Star Families and Tribal Veterans. MDVA’s Women Veteran Coordinator performed 385 contacts, filing 33 State and Federal benefits claims on behalf of women Veterans. Meanwhile, the Gold Star Family coordinator continued to provide support and assistance to families despite COVID-19. The Tribal Veterans Service Officer program set the national standard for providing Veteran services on Tribal lands.

MDVA is passionate about investing in employees, supervisors and managers so that they have the necessary skills to take care of our state’s veterans. The agency offers generous State of Minnesota employee benefits, competitive pay, ongoing education and training and a mission that instills pride.

Ultimately, working for MDVA is about caring for Veterans and having the opportunity to serve those that have served.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, MDVA found ways to withstand staffing shortfalls in Veterans Homes. Minnesota Veterans Homes have created innovative ways to address working remotely, a shortage experienced around the country. Specifically focusing on retention activities such as the Heroes Caring for Heroes publication, community engagement activities, employee wellness programs and resilient focused activities with staff. These innovative retention strategies coupled with recruitment activities such as job fairs, partnerships with local education institutions, and the use of social media ensure we are competitive into the future.

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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 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. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this responsibility was expertly carried out by the agile State Benefits Division.

### Ages Served
- Ages 80+ 20
- Ages 50-69 93
- Ages 50-59 121
- Ages 20-39 186
- Ages 0-19 62

### Total Hours of Service
- CORE Assistance 10,304
- SSAP 701

### Funding
- Total Funds Collected $350,000

### Type of Service
- Family Counseling
- Financial Counseling
- Individual Counseling
- Other

### Satisfaction
- Services Worked With: 100%
- Would Recommend: 100%

### Topics of Inquiry
- 324
- 282
- 1,172
- 123

### SSAP Financial Assistance
- Total Funds Collected $133,000
- HOME - 142 served
-Trade-Off - 71 served
- $19,674
- COVID-19 Disaster Relief Grant
- $1,937,000
- COVID-19 Special Needs Grant
- $2,004,000
- Total Dependants Served: 410
- Total Veterans Served: 3,057
- Total Calls Answered: 3,467

### Caring for Veterans in their final breaths
Julie Luchterhofer is the Therapeutic Recreation Director at the Minnesota Veterans Home - Silver Bay. The COVID-19 pandemic tested her resilience, but she went above and beyond to stay with Residents during some of the most challenging of times – sitting with them at their bedside and facilitating communication opportunities with families. "One was a Resident who I came to know well," said Julie. "I also know his wife, as she spent more time with him in the Memory Care Unit where he resided than she spent at her own home. She always planned to be with him when he died."

"But COVID-19 happened and she was allowed a brief visit, due to infection control protocols, and then I 'tagged' her out: I promised I would stay until the last breath. I played music, read to him and simply sat holding his hand. I remembered a recent article about his son's childhood in a Facebook post. I looked it up on the iPad and began reading it to him."

Julie read the article, occasionally seeing a glimmer in his previously unresponsive eye, and she played music by Fleetwood Mac. She knew he preferred it to the oldies because his son played in a band. She stayed with him as the song "Don't Stop" played and he gently unresponsive eye, and she played music by Fleetwood Mac. She knew he preferred it to the oldies because his son played in a band. She stayed with him as the song "Don't Stop" played and he gently

Later, Julie shared this story with his wife Sheila. She was comforted to know her husband had someone he knew with him in his last moments. "COVID-19 changed the way we did all our jobs at the Veterans Home, but it only made our commitment to be with the dying stronger," said Julie.

Shelia Leppala and Julie Luchterhofer, Recreation Directors at Sheila is holding a photo of her late husband Wayne Dahl, WWII Army Veteran and his first great-grandchild Henry Thesing. Photo taken at the front of Wayne and Sheila's home at the Lakeview National Golf Course.
LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS

Accomplishments
The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs had a very successful 2021 Legislative session.

New state funding was put in place to secure an end to Veteran homelessness and suicide in Minnesota. This includes $6.33 million in the biennium to provide State vouchers and supportive services to help homeless Veterans who are not eligible for Federal resources. It also included $1.05 million in the biennium to establish an office to provide coordination and collaboration on Minnesota’s efforts to prevent Veteran suicide.

Also included in the State Government Finance bill was an appropriation of $4.5 million to fully fund the new Redwood Falls State Veterans Cemetery. The landmark Veterans Restorative Justice Act is a new statutory section providing a specialized sentencing structure for Veterans who are found to have committed criminal offenses as a result of a service-related condition. This statewide standard for sentencing justice-involved Veterans in Minnesota’s courts has been a priority of Veterans groups since 2017, with a bill first receiving introduction in 2019.

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- State matching grants for Veteran memorials
- Funds for the Disabled Veterans Rest Camp on Big Marine Lake in Washington County
- Money to restore the Veterans Memorial Park in Kasota
- Funding to the Association of Minnesota Public Educational Radio Stations (AMPERS) for its Veterans’ Voices program to educate and engage communities with an emphasis on the untold stories of Veterans from diverse communities.

Finally, the Tax bill, Special Session House File 9 included two Veterans items. The bill now excludes Veteran disability compensation from the definition of “income” used for purposes of the homestead credit refund and renter’s property tax refund. It also changed the application deadline for the disabled Veteran’s homestead market value exclusion to Dec. 31.

Goals
The primary focus for the next legislative session is to secure capital investment funding for existing Veterans Homes and State Veterans Cemeteries, and additional construction funds for the three new Veteran Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston.

MDVA will also be pursuing some supplemental budget funding for the agency and, where possible, working to support the legislative priorities of our partners and stakeholders to include the Minnesota Commanders’ Task Force (CTF) and Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers (MACVSO).
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FISCAL YEAR 2021:
JULY 1, 2020-JUNE 30, 2021

EXPENDITURES

Total Expenditures............. $151,592,060

VETERANS HOMES

MINNEAPOLIS $61,490,453 40.6%
FERGUS FALLS $17,070,416 11.3%
SILVER BAY $14,379,036 9.5%
LOVERNE $13,345,851 8.8%
HASTINGS $11,130,285 7.3%

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES $15,695,553 10.4%
ADMINISTRATION $11,865,050 7.8%
CLAIMS AND OUTREACH $6,615,416 4.4%

RECEIPTS

Total Receipts............. $158,298,700

GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION $75,941,000 47.9%
VA PER DIEM $34,310,101 21.7%
RESIDENT MAINTENANCE CHARGES $14,855,335 9.4%
FEDERAL MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENTS $3,590,938 2.3%
OTHER REVENUE $28,832,239 18.2%
DONATIONS $857,689 0.6%

EXPENDITURES

VETERANS HOMES

MINNEAPOLIS 40.6%
FERGUS FALLS 11.3%
SILVER BAY 9.5%
LOVERNE 8.8%
HASTINGS 7.3%

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES 10.4%
ADMINISTRATION 7.8%
CLAIMS AND OUTREACH 4.4%

RECEIPTS

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
FY 2021 ANNUAL REPORT
DO YOU KNOW OF A VETERAN WHO NEEDS HELP?
Call 1-888-LINKVET
or visit MinnesotaVeteran.org

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
20 West 12th Street, St. Paul, MN 55155
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