



VETERANS AFFAIRS



Gratitude and Growth

As we approach the end of 2024, I want to take a moment to reflect on the past several months and extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of our Veterans, their families, and the entire Indiana County community. It has been a true honor to serve as your Director of Veterans Affairs, and I continue to be deeply inspired by the strength, resilience, and dedication of those who have served our nation.

This year has brought meaningful milestones and exciting initiatives, including the launch of our newsletter, the introduction of Battle Brew, and the success of Operation Green Light. Battle Brew has provided a relaxed space for Veterans to connect, share stories, and build friendships, and we look forward to continuing this in the new year. Operation Green Light showed a powerful display of support, with homes and businesses across Indiana County proudly showing green lights to honor our Veterans. We are grateful to everyone who participated in these initiatives, which have helped connect our Veterans, honor their service, and strengthen our community.

As we look ahead, our commitment to supporting and empowering the Veteran community remains steadfast. We are dedicated to strengthening the network of care and support available to our Veterans and their families. Together, we can continue to build a community where those who have served are honored year-round.

In the spirit of holiday cheer and community, we are excited to invite you to our Open House on Thursday, December 12th, from 1:00-4:00 pm. We would love for you to join us for festive treats, meet our dedicated team, and learn more about the services we offer to our Veterans and their families. Your presence would mean a great deal to us, and we look forward to celebrating the season with you.

As we enter the holiday season, I would like to extend my warmest wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May this time of year bring you joy, peace, and a renewed sense of gratitude for the many blessings in your life.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we will continue to make Indiana County a place where Veterans and their families thrive. Cheers to another year of service, growth, and building stronger connections within our community.

Jessica

Jessica Walker
Director, Department of Veterans Affairs

Highlights

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Veteran Spotlight

Matt Colian enlisted in the United States Air Force in 2009 and was assigned to the 89th Operations Group at Joint Base Andrews. In 2011, he transferred to Quantico Marine Corps Base, joining the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He later served with the Joint Information Support Task Force and completed service in 2015.



After leaving active duty, Matt graduated from the Act 120 Basic Municipal Police Officer Training Academy and served as a Conservation Police Officer for the PA Fish and Boat Commission before being medically retired in 2021. He currently works as a Veteran's Employment Representative at PA CareerLink, assisting Veterans facing employment barriers. Matt resides in Indiana with his wife Megan, their children Scottlyn and Stetson, and their 17-year-old Beagle, Nellie.



SATURDAY, DEC. 7TH
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

In the spirit of Christmas, come join us as we say "Thank You" to all of our active duty men and women serving our country.



Live Music, Santa, Wagon Rides, Meet a Soldier
Refreshments available for purchase to benefit the cause!

Show your appreciation by donating a Christmas tree
& include a special message on the tag.

Unable to attend but still would like to donate?
Call Mytrysak Family Tree Farms at **724-463-0570** to donate a tree.
Mastercard, Visa, and Discover are accepted.

Hosted by the Trees for Troops Day Committee
Mytrysak Family Tree Farm
Recipient of the 2024 "Spirit Award"
1803 Fleming Road, Indiana

INDIANA COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

Department of Veterans Affairs

Holiday Open House

THURSDAY | 12 | DECEMBER

1:00 - 4:00 pm
825 Philadelphia Street
Courthouse - Second Floor

Meet our team, learn about our services, enjoy refreshments, and connect with the community!

For more information call
(724) 465-3815

HOMELESS HEROES

Stocking Project

DONATE NOW UNTIL
NOVEMBER 30!!

Our mission is to work with our community members in Western PA to provide supplies to create filled stockings for Christmas to over 2,500 Homeless Veterans currently under our care in the area.

Items needed for this years project

We are accepting gift cards to Walmart and Giant Eagle as well as cash donation's this year to help us get supplies

- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Plastic Toothbrush Holder
- Wash Cloth
- Individually Wrapped Soap Bars
- Plastic Travel Soap Holder
- Crew Warm Socks
- Razors
- Winter Gloves
- Winter Hats
- 17" 19" Stockings
- Drawstring Bags

OUR MAIN DROP OFF LOCATIONS OF SUPPLIES: BEHIND PIERCE HALL AND IUP POLICE DEPARTMENT
EACH LOCATION WILL HAVE AN IDENTIFIABLE BOX PLACED FOR DONATIONS TO BE PUT IN
PICK-UP OF SUPPLIES AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS MUST BE SCHEDULED WITH US AHEAD OF TIME

Contact Information:
Katelyn Moore
email: ksqdc@iup.edu
phone #: 724-954-4035
Julia King
email: mlzdc@iup.edu
phone #: 724-422-4968



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7
First Commonwealth Bank Presents: "It's A Wonderful Life" Festival

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14
First Commonwealth Bank Presents: "It's A Wonderful Life" Festival

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21
First Commonwealth Bank Presents: "It's A Wonderful Life" Festival





Dreams for Veterans

Navy Veteran Eddie first saw the rusted hull of the U.S.S. Arizona in 1955. For years he had wanted to visit the Arizona Memorial to salute and pay homage to the sailors lost in Pearl Harbor. When he was diagnosed with terminal cancer it seemed as though he would never make it. But Dream Foundation's Dreams for Veterans program helped Eddie with his final dream, the thing he most wanted before he died.

For 30 years, Dream Foundation has helped fulfill the final Dreams of terminally ill adults. Dreams for Veterans was launched when Dream Foundation's Chief Executive Officer Kisa Heyer set out to create a program dedicated to those who serve or have served.

Today, Dreams for Veterans serves all military Veterans, active duty service members and Reserve and National Guard members in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. [Read More](#)



One Year Since One Million

Last fall, on Nov. 8, 2023, the millionth Veteran joined VA's [Million Veteran Program \(MVP\)](#). With that, MVP reached a milestone set more than a decade ago when the program was just an idea.

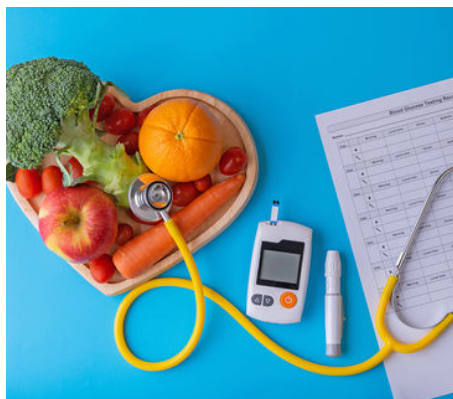
MVP is now the world's largest and most diverse genetic research program within a health care system. Thanks to more than one million Veterans who have joined MVP, we are working to better understand how genes, lifestyle, military experiences and exposures affect health and wellness. Our goal is to find new ways to detect, prevent and treat health conditions that matter to Veterans like you.

Since our start in 2011, 700+ researchers have used information from MVP and have published more than 400 scientific papers on a wide range of health conditions. [Read More](#)



Check your Health Card

The Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) is not required to receive VA health care, but it is beneficial to quickly check in for your VA appointments. Please see the notification regarding the VHIC renewal is not a scam: The National Health Eligibility Center (HEC) is in the process of notifying 1.5 million Veterans nationwide that their VHIC has or will expire soon. The preferred method is to renew your [VHIC online](#). Once your card request is submitted, you will receive a response that your request is "On Hold." The card request will then be manually reviewed and approved for printing and shipping. [Read More](#)



Navigating Diabetes

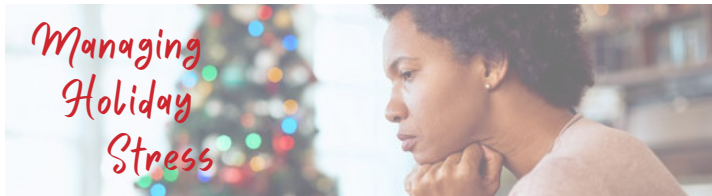
Many VA medical centers offer a diabetes education program that caters to the unique needs of Veterans. VA and the DOD created the [Diabetes Self-Management Education \(DSME\) and Training Program](#). This program guides you through self-care behaviors that play a role in managing your diabetes journey. The [Veterans Health Library](#) includes a new [Diabetes Stoplight Tool](#). This helps you know what to do based on your blood glucose level and symptoms. When results are in your goal ranges, you're in the "green zone." If you move into the "yellow" or "red" zones, the tool helps you with next steps. You can learn signs and ways to avoid and treat [diabetic ketoacidosis](#) and [low blood glucose](#) as well. [Read More](#)



Monetary Challenges

Financial problems can create stress that shows up in many ways. Loss of work, unexpected expenses, increasing debt, housing or food uncertainty, and poor financial planning and budgeting can cause an overwhelming sense of shame and hopelessness. These factors may lead to vulnerable moments where Veterans and their loved ones may become more susceptible to scams. The impacts of these scams can be significant and may result in Veterans experiencing a loss of financial stability, overwhelming debt and difficulty meeting basic living expenses. Furthermore, the impact goes beyond finances and can negatively impact Veterans' physical and [mental well-being](#). [Read More](#)

Resources



They come every year whether we're ready or not... the holidays. The holiday season is marketed as "the most wonderful time of the year," but it can also be one of the most stressful times of the year.

While there are many environmental and life factors that can increase stress, this time of year can highlight mental health concerns, like depression and anxiety, as it can be a time of self-reflection, loneliness and sadness. Specifically for Veterans, the holidays can enhance difficulties adjusting to civilian life, exacerbate post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, put a focus on certain dates or anniversaries, and induce guilt.

However overwhelming this season can be, there are ways to focus on your mental health and keep your stress levels in check over the next few weeks.

If you feel like you might be heading toward a crisis, VA or community-based services could help. Take a confidential, anonymous [risk assessment](#) to see if stress and depression might be affecting you. [Read More](#)



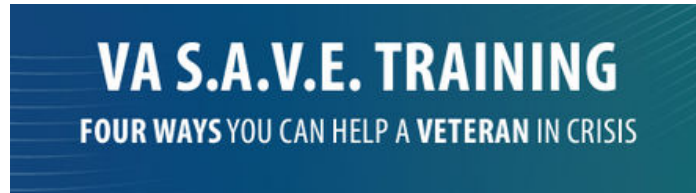
The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) is a comprehensive health care program in which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries. In general, CHAMPVA covers most health care services and supplies that are medically and psychologically necessary. Upon confirmation of eligibility, you will receive a CHAMPVA Guide that specifically addresses covered and non-covered services and supplies. Click the links below to learn more:

[CHAMPVA Overview](#)
[CHAMPVA Guide](#)
[CHAMPVA Policy Manual](#)
[Pharmacy Benefits](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[CHAMPVA Fact Sheets](#)
[How to Apply for CHAMPVA](#)
[Locating a Provider](#)

CHAMPVA Contacts



Phone:
800-733-8387
8:05 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. ET
Monday through Friday



VA S.A.V.E. Training is a free, brief online or in-person course that will help you act with care and compassion if you come across a Veteran who is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide. The acronym S.A.V.E. helps you remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:



Know the **Signs** that indicate a Veteran might be thinking about suicide



Ask the most important question of all — "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"



Validate the Veteran's experience



Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help



Vet Tix provides tickets to events which reduce stress, strengthen family bonds, build life-long memories and encourage service members and Veterans to stay engaged with local communities and American life. They support our troops by honoring their service and providing positive family and life experiences, during and after their years of service to our country. Vet Tix provides tickets to all branches of currently-serving Military and Veterans, including immediate family of troops KIA. Vet Tix secures tickets to sporting events, concerts, performing arts, educational and family activities across the nation. VetTixers sign up online. We verify their service. VetTixers request tickets to events that interest them, then pay a small delivery fee to receive their free tickets.



Thank you for reading!

Indiana County Department of Veterans Affairs	(724) 465-3815
https://www.indianacountypa.gov/departments/veteran-affairs/	825 Philadelphia Street Second Floor, Court House Indiana, PA 15701

