



VETERANS AFFAIRS



A New Year of Hope and Connection

Dear Indiana County Veterans, Families and Community Partners,

As we welcome 2025, I'm reminded of the incredible strength, resilience, and dedication that define our Veteran community and their families. Serving as your Director is a privilege I deeply cherish, and I am inspired every day by your stories, your sacrifices, and the support you give to one another.

The start of a new year is a time to reflect but also a time to look forward. This year, my New Year's resolution is to focus on creating long-lasting change—the kind that builds a stronger foundation for our community and ensures that every Veteran and their family feels supported, valued, and empowered. Whether it is expanding access to resources, fostering new partnerships, or advocating for services, our office is committed to meaningful progress that makes a difference in your lives.

I encourage you to take this opportunity to set your own resolutions. It might be reconnecting with fellow Veterans, exploring new programs and services, or simply prioritizing your well-being. Small steps can lead to big changes, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

We're especially excited about the opening of the new Indiana County Clinic later this year, a milestone that will significantly enhance access to vital healthcare services for our Veterans. Additionally, mark your calendars for a large-scale Veteran event planned for fall 2025. This event will bring together dozens of Veteran-centric organizations to provide critical services to Indiana County Veterans and continue outreach to rural areas in the county. It will also be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our community, honor our shared experiences, and strengthen the connections that bind us together.

This year, we're doubling down on our efforts to ensure you have access to everything you need. From compensation or pension support, mental health services, social gatherings and educational workshops, there will be something for everyone. If you ever have questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out—we're in this together.

Let's approach 2025 with hope in our hearts and determination in our actions. This year brings new opportunities to create meaningful progress and lasting change. I look forward to seeing you all in the new year and continuing our work together and I'm excited for the opportunities ahead.

Jessica
Jessica Walker
Director, Department of Veterans Affairs

Highlights
VA S.A.V.E Training
Parsonage Sleepout
Brick by Brick Vets
VA Suicide Annual Report
Live Whole Health App
PA Navigate
Mom's Meals

**Veterans Leadership Program's
Military Share Food Distribution**

**January 13th
10AM**

**2934 Smallman St
Pittsburgh, PA 15201**

**January 29th
by
Appointment**

**727 Goucher St
Johnstown, PA 15905**

Call 844-857-8384

Veteran Spotlight



Chaplain Oyango Burney, a Philadelphia native, has a distinguished military career and a strong commitment to education and community service. He served in the Marine Corps (1989-1995), Air Force (2003-2009), and Army (2012-2018), with roles including airborne, marksmanship instructor, engineer architect, and human trafficking trainer. He also met President George H. W. Bush and served overseas in Japan, Russia, and other countries.

Chaplain Burney earned degrees from Thomas Edison State College, Ohio Christian University, and Clarks Summit University, and is pursuing a PhD in Educational Leadership at Liberty University. He's also writing a book titled *Living Your Best Life in the Present*.

In 2022, he became a chaplain at Allegheny Valley Hospital and founded the non-profit "Living Your Best Life in the Present," focusing on community outreach. His first major project was securing a coach bus for the Indiana High School Cross Country Team.

Chaplain Burney is a proud father to his son, Devon, a high school sophomore on the track team, and his daughter, Jade, a junior high school baritone player.

LEARN HOW TO SAVE A LIFE

VA S.A.V.E

VA S.A.V.E. IS A ONE-HOUR GATEKEEPER TRAINING PROGRAM (SIGNS OF SUICIDE, ASKING ABOUT SUICIDE, VALIDATING FEELINGS, ENCOURAGING HELP AND EXPEDITING TREATMENT) GUNLOCK DEMONSTRATION WILL BE PROVIDED

**SATURDAY JANUARY 25TH 2025
11AM-1PM**

LIGHT LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

LAKEVIEW LODGE AT TREASURE LAKE
3871 BAY RD
DUBOIS PA 15801

PLEASE CONTACT JOHN FERRO AT JOHN@WATCHMANPROTECTIONPLUS.COM IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING

THE VETERANS PARSONAGE HOMELESS SLEEPOUT

February 8, 2025

From 8:00 am until 10:00 pm on **Saturday, February 8, 2025**, board members of the Veterans Parsonage and students from the IUP PTX Military Service Fraternity will be joining forces to hold a campout in front of the Indiana Wal-Mart to **raise awareness and funds for the Veterans Parsonage in Indiana, PA and to shed some light on the homeless Veterans problem that plagues our nation.**

The **Veteran's Parsonage** is a non-profit organization funded through private donations. It provides critical services to American Military Veterans in terms of social services, life-skill services, counseling services, and employment services, as well as a warm place to rest their heads out of the elements.

The Parsonage was formed in order to assist and encourage responsible participation by Veterans in returning to the workplace and successful re-integration back into society.

Please stop to show your support! Food & Drink items will be accepted for event participants, as we will not be eating or drinking anything that isn't donated (much like our Veterans who find themselves in this situation). **Monetary donations as well as cleaning supplies, non perishable food items, and personal hygiene products will be collected for the Veterans Parsonage during the event.**

THANK YOU for Protecting Us

VA News and Information



[Yoga for well-being](#)

VA offers free online and in-person yoga classes and mindfulness training to Veterans across the nation. VA hosts these classes through a partnership with [Veterans Yoga Project, Inc.](#) The classes provide a no-cost opportunity to Veterans seeking to improve their mental, physical and emotional health through yoga and mindfulness practices. VA and Veterans Yoga Project are working together to make more Veterans aware of the benefits of yoga while offering more classes. In 2023, Veterans Yoga Project reported that 75% of Veterans who took part in their programs felt less distress and 72% saw a reduction in pain. [Read More](#)



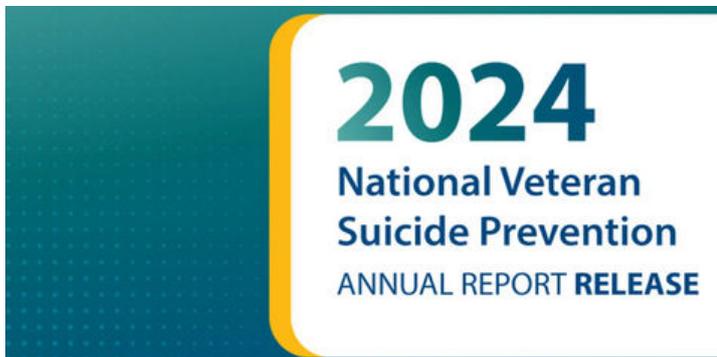
[Brick by Brick Vets](#)

[Brick by Brick Vets](#) has pioneered an innovative approach to support Veterans. Founded by Veterans, this online gaming organization uses Twitch—a platform for gamers—to host Q&A sessions with VA experts and a weekly esports stream. By creating a space for Veterans and supporters to connect, Brick by Brick Vets fosters a community focused on mental health, life skills, leadership, successful transitioning, and play. Driven by the belief that military camaraderie should extend beyond service, the organization provides networking opportunities and essential resources to help Veterans thrive in a welcoming and inclusive environment. [Read More](#)



[2025 Comp Increases](#)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has confirmed that the 2025 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for VA compensation will be 2.5%. This increase, effective from December 2024 through December 2025, mirrors the annual COLA determined by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The COLA is calculated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which tracks changes in the cost of goods and services. Each year, the CPI is compared to the previous year's data, and if a rise is noted, the COLA is applied. Veterans can expect this increase to help offset inflation and rising living costs in the coming year. [Click here to see the new compensation rates.](#)



[Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#)

The [2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#) analyzes Veteran suicide data from 2001 to 2022, with 2022 being the most recent year for which data is available. Our top clinical priority is preventing Veteran suicide. We use evidence-based research and suicide analytics as the foundation for our programs and initiatives. Our richest data related to Veteran suicide comes from our annual report. The report contains the most comprehensive data about Veteran suicide mortality to date. Key report findings include:

- In 2022, there were 6,407 suicides among Veterans and 41,484 among non-Veteran U.S. adults.
- Among all U.S. adults in 2022, there were, on average, 131.2 suicides per day, with 17.6 Veteran suicides per day.
- On average, seven suicides per day were among Veterans who received Veterans Health Administration (VHA) care in 2021 or 2022, and 10.6 were among other Veterans.

[Read More](#)



[VA Raises the bar on care of Women](#)

The [Barriers for Women Veterans to VA Health Care 2024](#) report examines the input of over 7,000 women Veterans and shows that women are happier with VA health care than ever before. This comprehensive study provides crucial insights into your experiences, and it highlights both our successes and areas where we can do better.

Key highlights from the survey results:

- Safety and comfort: 83% of women Veterans who use VA feel safe and comfortable at VA facilities.
- Provider satisfaction: 82% of women Veterans who use VA are pleased with their VA provider and feel respected by their primary care providers, specialists, nurses and office staff.
- Sense of belonging: 74% of women Veterans who use VA feel a strong sense of belonging at VA.

[Read More](#)

Resources



It is now easier than ever for you to Live Whole Health thanks to VA's Live Whole Health mobile app. Live Whole Health is a free, easy to use mobile application created for Veterans and others who are ready to take the next step in their Whole Health journey. Whole Health is VA's holistic approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers care around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you.



Mom's Meals offers home-delivered, medically tailored meals designed by dietitians and chefs to meet various health and nutritional needs. Many meals may be covered by health plans or government programs. You might qualify for free or low-cost meals if you're over 65, disabled, need help with grocery shopping or meal prep, or are on Medicaid or a Medicare Advantage plan with meal benefits. Contact your health plan or local Area Agency on Aging to check eligibility. Not eligible? Meals are available for direct purchase starting at just \$7.99, making nutritious, convenient options accessible to everyone.

PA NAVIGATE

Through PA VETConnect, Veterans and Veteran advocates have access to the commonwealth's premier information and referral database, compiled specifically to improve the lives of service members, veterans, and their families.

PA Navigate connects Pennsylvanians with health and social care services in their local community. Find help now with food, housing, utilities, transportation and more just by entering your zip code!



Be Adaptive Equipment is committed to producing the highest quality adaptive hunting, shooting, and fishing equipment for all disabled outdoorsmen and women. Their goal is to help physically challenged people get back into doing the recreational activities they love. The company designs and manufactures shooting rests for rifles, shotguns, pistols, crossbows, and compound bows – along with a line of adaptive fishing equipment. Your VA hospital could also help purchase equipment, so ask at your next appointment!

Thank you for reading!

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https://www.indianacountypa.gov/departments/veteran-affairs/	825 Philadelphia Street Second Floor, Court House Indiana, PA 15701

