



VETERANS AFFAIRS



Eternal Gratitude

Dear Veterans, Families, and Members of Our Community,

As Memorial Day approaches, we find ourselves once again at a moment of national reflection—a time when we pause our busy lives to remember the men and women who gave everything they had so that we might live in freedom and peace. It is a sacred day, one filled with gratitude, calling us to look beyond the parades and ceremonies, and to focus deeply on the heart of what this day truly signifies.

Memorial Day is not merely a holiday; it is a solemn promise we make to those who never returned home. Our freedoms—our right to speak freely, to worship as we choose, to pursue our dreams—have been paid for with the blood of patriots. Behind every name etched into marble and granite lies a story: a young soldier with dreams of a family, a sailor who yearned to return to a hometown baseball game, an airman who believed in a cause greater than himself, a Marine who led with courage and selflessness. These were sons and daughters, neighbors and friends, ordinary people who answered an extraordinary call.

To the families of the fallen—your burden of grief is something few can truly understand. Your strength and resilience stand as a testament to the spirit of those we have lost. You, too, have given a part of yourselves for this country, and we are forever indebted to you.

And to our Veterans—you honor the fallen not only with remembrance but by how you live and lead today. Your continued service to our communities reminds us all that the price of freedom is not only paid on the battlefield but also carried forward in our daily lives.

Today, let us remember that patriotism is not just a word but a way of life. Let us reach out to the families who mourn not just today but every day. Let us teach our children that the freedoms they enjoy were bought with a heavy, precious price. As we stand before the flags waving in the breeze or bow our heads at the sound of Taps, let us each make a personal vow: to never forget, to never take for granted, and to always honor the lives given for ours.

I thank each and every one of you for taking the time to remember, reflect, and recommit to the values that define us as a nation. May we always strive to be worthy of their sacrifice.

With deepest gratitude and respect,

Jessica

Highlights

Blessing of the Bikes

Veterans Breakfast

Travel 101

Empowering Caregivers

Container Gardening

Veteran Buddy Link

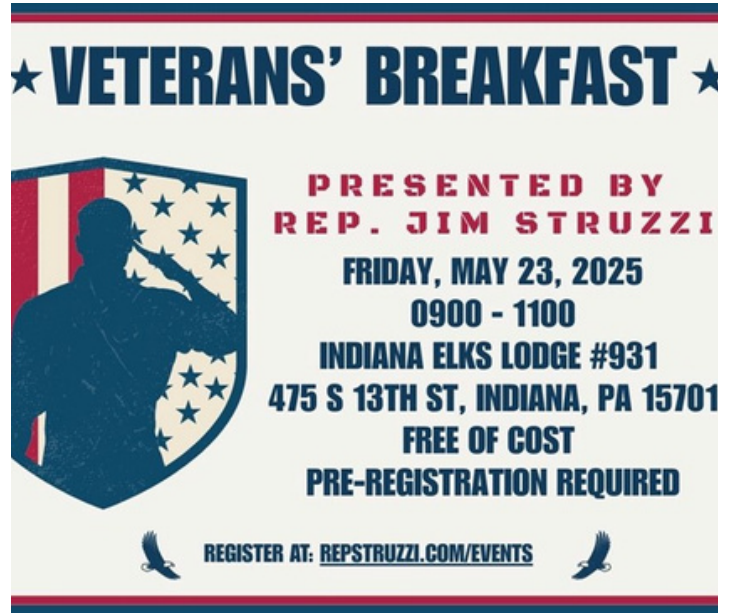
DIC

Community News



May 18th at 12:30 pm
Freedom Church
905 McKnight Road
Indiana, PA

Blessing
of the
Bikes
(Motorcycles & Bicycles)



★ VETERANS' BREAKFAST ★

PRESENTED BY
REP. JIM STRUZZI

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025
0900 - 1100
INDIANA ELKS LODGE #931
475 S 13TH ST, INDIANA, PA 15701
FREE OF COST
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

REGISTER AT: REPSTRUZZI.COM/EVENTS



Veterans Outreach Group Inc.

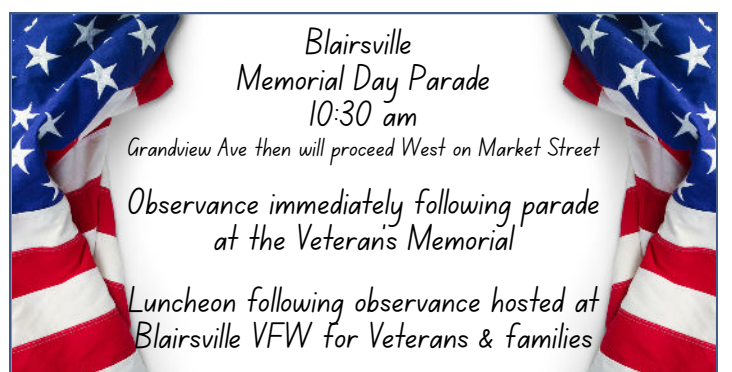
May 24, 2025

Veterans Outreach Memorial Ride

To benefit our local veterans

Registration 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Rider - \$20
Rider w/passenger - \$25
All street legal vehicles welcome - \$20 per person
Kick stands up at 11:00 AM

Starting point will be at Homer City Legion; trip destination at Flight 93 Memorial to honor 5 modern day warriors, and back to Homer City Legion where entertainment by DJ Wayne, food, and basket raffle will be available.



Blairsville
Memorial Day Parade
10:30 am
Grandview Ave then will proceed West on Market Street
Observance immediately following parade
at the Veterans Memorial
Luncheon following observance hosted at
Blairsville VFW for Veterans & families

Veteran Spotlight



Rich enlisted in the U.S. Army after graduating high school and began his military career as a Crane Shovel Operator with the 36th Field Artillery in Germany. In 1962, he made a career change to become an 11D Armor Intelligence Specialist, where he was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division based in Hawaii. During his service, he deployed to Vietnam and served as a door gunner with the 68th Armed Helicopter Company.

After completing his military service, Rich returned to Vietnam as a civilian construction worker for several years before coming back to the United States. He then joined the U.S. Postal Service, starting as a postal clerk and working his way up to the position of Postmaster. He proudly served in that role until his retirement in 1998. In retirement, Rich has remained active through Civil War reenactments, hunting, fishing, and volunteering with the Indiana County chapter of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), where he helps transport local veterans to their medical appointments. He and his beloved wife, Le Thi Anh, have been married for 59 years and are joyfully looking forward to celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary this year.



Veterans Leadership Program's

Military Share Food Distribution

May 30th
12PM
727 Goucher St
Johnstown, PA 15905

Call 1-844-857-8387 to schedule appointment!

VA News and Information



Veteran Travel 101

VA wants to make it easy for you to receive care and help you travel to and from appointments. VA offers many options for quality health care tailored for Veterans, including medical centers, community-based clinics, virtual care, and telehealth. If you need an in-person appointment, you may incur travel costs — but you may be eligible for reimbursement.

VA's travel reimbursement program can help. "Our mission is to ensure timely access to world-class health care regardless of your location or how you choose to get care," said Hillary Peabody, acting assistant under secretary for Integrated Veteran Care. "Travel reimbursements can make a real difference by putting money back in Veterans' wallets. We know the challenges of getting to an appointment; the cost shouldn't be one of them." [Read More](#)



Building a New Future

Veterans with Parkinson's disease can receive a wide range of care and services from VA, including medical services, specialized treatments, physical therapy, and caregiver support. For some Veterans at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System, their care includes regular check-ins on their latest Lego set. Currently, VA serves around 110,000 Veterans with Parkinson's. While the exact cause is unknown, Parkinson's can be considered a presumptive condition for service connection due to exposure to Agent Orange or herbicides, as well as service at Camp Lejeune. Veterans and caregivers can talk to their VA care teams about Parkinson's disease, risk factors, and treatment options. [Read More](#)



Empowering Caregivers

Caregiving can be rewarding but also overwhelming and isolating. Support and connection are key, as Dr. Kelli Tharpe found through the Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program. Her experience gave her a lifeline, and now she's offering that same comfort and guidance to others.

Kelli's story highlights the power of the program, where caregivers can connect with peers who understand their struggles. The mentors serve as a powerful reminder that healing and triumph are possible. The program shows that support and understanding can make a real difference. Visit the Caregiver Peer Support Mentoring Program page to sign up as a mentor or mentee, or contact your CSP team to learn about available resources. [Read More](#)



Be Vigilant of Scammers

Veterans who receive higher compensation with Special Monthly Compensation (SMC), Purple Heart recipients, Veterans receiving income-based pension or survivors' pension, and those receiving specially adapted housing (SAH) benefits are frequently targeted by bad actors.

The increased financial compensation associated with SMC benefits and the visibility of Purple Heart recipients can attract scammers looking to exploit Veterans. These scams range from identity theft and fraudulent investment schemes to fraudulent financial services charging unnecessary fees for services VA offers for free.

VA is committed to safeguarding Veterans, their families and caregivers against fraudulent activity, and it provides the following guidance to protect Veterans' benefits and avoid benefit payment redirection. [Read More](#)



Container Gardening

For many Americans, having access to enough fresh fruits and vegetables to meet the USDA's recommendation to fill half your plate can be difficult due to distance to grocery stores or lack of transportation. Growing your own plants can provide a wallet-friendly option without needing to leave home. Consider starting a container garden even if you have never gardened before. From fresh flowers to herbs and even produce, almost any plant can be grown in a container! Check out the [VA recipe page](#) or [Healthy Teaching Kitchen](#) for more ways to incorporate produce into your diet. If you want to learn more about this or any other nutrition related topic, contact your local VA to speak with a registered dietitian. [Read More](#)

Resources



HELLO.

Whether you're just getting out of the service or you've been a civilian for years now, the **VA Welcome Kit** can help guide you to the benefits and services you've earned. Based on where you are in life, your VA benefits and services can support you in different ways. Keep your welcome kit handy so you can turn to it throughout your life—like when it's time to go to school, get a job, buy a house, get health care, retire, or make plans for your care as you age.

Download Your VA Welcome Kit

24/7, confidential crisis support for Veterans and their loved ones



If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, reach caring, trained responders **24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

When you call the Veterans Crisis Line, here is what you can expect:

- A qualified responder will answer your call, ready to listen and help.
- The responder will ask a few questions, such as whether you or the Veteran you're concerned about may be in immediate danger or at risk for suicide.
- The conversation is free and confidential, and you decide how much information to share.
- Support doesn't end with your conversation. Our responders can connect you with the resources you need.

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

You're not alone—
the **Veterans Crisis Line** is here for you.



Dial 988 then **Press 1**



Chat online at
[VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat)



Text 838255



Scan the QR code to download
Veterans Crisis Line resources.



VETERAN BUDDY LINK SHARE IN THE CAMARADERIE OF OTHER VETERANS!

LARGEST U.S. MILITARY VETERAN DIRECTORY
2,486,531 VETERAN MEMBERS

Veterans take care of each other, and no Veteran should ever feel alone. Join below to discover new friendships and share in the camaraderie of other Veterans in your neighborhood!

JOIN THE CAMARADERIE

Dependency & Indemnity Compensation

What is DIC?

Monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors of:

- Service members who died while on active duty, active duty for training or inactive duty training, OR
- Veterans who died as a result of a service-connected injury or disease, OR
- Veterans who did not die as a result of a service-connected injury or disease, but were totally disabled by a service-connected disability:
 - For at least 10 years before death, OR
 - Since their release from active duty and for at least five years before death, OR
 - For at least one year before death, if they were a former prisoner of war and died after Sept. 30, 1999

How much does VA Pay?

View the benefits tables for surviving spouses and children **HERE**

How can you Apply?

Call our office at (724) 465-3815 for questions & appointment

For more information visit **HERE**

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

