

WASHINGTON STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**VETERANS  
AFFAIRS**



Call **1-800-562-2308** for Statewide Assistance

[www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov)

[www.facebook.com/WSDVA](https://www.facebook.com/WSDVA)

[www.twitter.com/WDVA](https://www.twitter.com/WDVA)

*"Serving Those Who Served"*

# VETERAN VOICES

## SEPTEMBER 2020

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER

### *Greetings from the Director*

#### **A Message from the Director**

#### **Creating Awareness and Sharing Resources on Suicide Prevention**

*By WDVA Director, Alfie Alvarado-Ramos*



This month, I would like to share an open letter to our veterans community on suicide prevention. This letter is made up from the input of many members of the Governor's Challenge Team On Veteran Suicide Prevention and I am grateful for the work they have done, and will continue to do, for Washington's Veterans and their Families.

*"Dear Washington State Military and Veterans Community:*

After years of service to our country, as our service members return to our communities, they often feel displaced. The home town has not changed, but the service member has; they've grown, they've experienced deep friendships and known deep trust, and many have lost friends. Through understanding and contextualization both our communities of civilians and our veterans can find a new path forward together.

During these stressful times, we want to support those who have bravely served our country, and their families who are at higher risk for suicide. It is more important than ever that we focus our resources on suicide prevention strategies that we know will save precious lives, such as limiting access to lethal means, like medications and firearms, for those who are experiencing suicidal ideation.

The good news is everyone has a hand in preventing suicide and anyone can save a life. The Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide has given our state the momentum and support to find what strategies will work best for our community. Suicide Prevention begins with each of us. We can find new pathways and methods to reach our veterans

and their family members and keep them strong and resilient. Our collective impact will reduce suicides as we empower our veteran community and incorporate non-invasive therapies and solutions.

Suicide Prevention can not only happen in the clinical setting. At that point, the crisis has already happened and coping has failed. To truly be preventative, we need to intervene at the community level, at the places where Veterans live, work, learn, and connect with their families and friends. Prevention is about mitigating the crisis at the earliest point possible, not the latest.

Creating an environment where asking for help or reaching out are signs of strength and not weakness is vital. Life is stressful and knowing you are not alone is something we can't emphasize enough. We encourage you to be there for others but also want you to be there for yourself. It's time for all of us to connect, work, communicate and care for each other. Suicide not only harms the family but also harms an entire community. A suicide is like a pebble in the water, the ripples go outward and on.

Suicide prevention is critical work in our veterans community because there is something we all can do, whether it's taking steps to reduce risk in your own home, knowing how to support someone in your life who is struggling or engaging in small acts of kindness as a way of life. We need to move from awareness to action. Suicide Prevention isn't just about stopping a terrible event, is it about helping people get their lives back!"

I would like to again thank the members of the Governor's Challenge Team and leave you with a few resources as well.

- If you are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, or if someone you know is in crisis, call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or chat online. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. For support via text on the Crisis Text Line, start a conversation by texting "HEAL" to 741741.
- [LEARN – Suicide Prevention Month 2020 Toolkit](#)
- [Your wellbeing during COVID-19](#)

WDVA will continue to work with the Service Members, Veterans and Families Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee as we develop and implement components of the [statewide suicide prevention plan](#). Together we can make a difference for service members, veterans and their families.

To find out more about Your WDVA Suicide Prevention Program, or to get involved, please visit us online at [www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov) or contact Codie Garza at [codie.garza@dva.wa.gov](mailto:codie.garza@dva.wa.gov).

## BE THERE FOR OUR SERVICE MEMBERS & VETERANS



REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

CRISIS LINE : 1-800-273-8255

SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH



**Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee**  
**VIRTUAL TOWN HALL SESSION**  
**October 21, 2020 - 11:30—2:00 pm**

Join your Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee &  
VA Regional Office For a session on

**What Happens After I File,**  
**How to Submit my Claim &**  
**What to Expect**

REGISTER HERE:

[www.eventbrite.com/e/vaac-virtual-town-hall-claims-what-happen-i-file-my-claim-tickets-122281480199](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/vaac-virtual-town-hall-claims-what-happen-i-file-my-claim-tickets-122281480199)

Please join us via Zoom for our Virtual Town Hall here:

[https://wdva.zoom.us/j/92934761412?  
pwd=NHVsY2ZNUWhxekxEQlJGWVwVmVTdz09](https://wdva.zoom.us/j/92934761412?pwd=NHVsY2ZNUWhxekxEQlJGWVwVmVTdz09)

Meeting ID: 929 3476 1412 | Passcode: 545974

One tap mobile: +1253215-8782 US (Tacoma)

Any question, please contact Liza Narciso at

[LisaN@dva.wa.gov](mailto:LisaN@dva.wa.gov)



*"Serving Those Who Served"*

# Women Veterans Advisory Committee Virtual Coffee Break Discussion Session *Building & Developing Trust* 10:00 a.m.—October 29, 2020



**Theme:** Building and Developing Trust

**Focus:** The Coffee Chat will be an open, informal space for Women Veterans to share their thoughts and feelings regarding all that is going on, and working to find a way for us all to stay connected during this time of quarantine.

**Speaker:** Dr. Kendra Thomas, Regional Director of Military Initiatives at Southern New Hampshire University

During this pandemic, we are being tasked to find different ways to build community. Join us to connect with other women veterans and explore fun and exciting ways to build and develop trust during COVID. Dr. Kendra Thomas, Regional Director of Military Initiatives at Southern New Hampshire University, will create a safe and fun space for us all to communicate and build better relationships with one another.

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

<https://wdva.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYrdO2ppj8pHNOY3pLvF3jO2jXgvf9yhpuq>

*After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.*



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## Full Circle Continues Donating Meals to Washington Veterans Homes

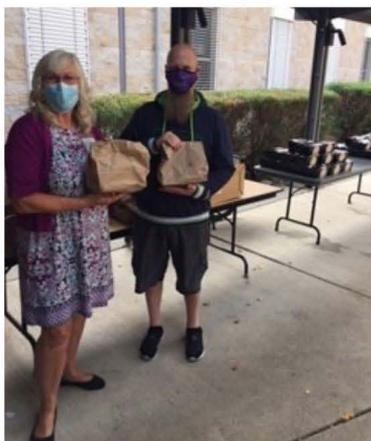
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Our honored residents at the Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard and even our Washington Soldiers Home in Orting recently received hundreds of meals from the Full Circle Meals Program that has helped to provide thousands of meals to our Washington Veterans Homes.

We would like to thank the many restaurants involved, the many volunteers that assist hand out meals and to Jill Deciane of our Washington Veterans Home for bringing meals to our Washington Soldiers Home and for helping to facilitate this program safely into our veterans homes.

#WeLoveOurCommunity

## *Providing Meals to Veterans & WDVA Staff*



#WeLoveOurCommunity



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## **Update on WDVA Mandated Furlough Dates**

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# CHANGES TO OPERATING HOURS

## TEMPORARY CLOSURES

To comply with Governor Inslee's budget reduction directive requiring state employee's to take FOUR additional mandatory furlough days by the end of 2020,

### **WDVA Offices will be CLOSED**

- **Friday, August 21**
- **Tuesday, September 8**
- **Friday, October 9**
- **Friday, November 6**

### **WDVA Cemetery will be CLOSED**

- **Monday, August 17**
- **Monday, September 14**
- **Monday, October 12**
- **Monday, November 23**

In addition, some personnel in all four State Veterans Homes will also be furloughed on these days, although the Homes will remain operational and continue to provide all required direct care services to residents.

**Your phone calls and emails are important to us, and we will respond to your requests as soon as possible following the furlough day.**

**Have Questions?**

**Email:** [communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)

**Call:** 1-800-562-2308

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## Window Visits Taking Place at Veterans Homes

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Weekly visits are the BEST for our Honored Veterans at our Four Veterans Homes. We were lucky enough to join in on this weekly visit for Ken at our Spokane Veterans Home. If you have a friend or family member that wants to connect via window visits or video conferencing, please contact us at [communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)

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## **WDVA Conducts 22 Push Up Challenge to Raise Awareness & Spread Resources on Suicide Prevention**

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Our Walla Walla Veterans Home Staff are finishing off the month-long social media campaign

that provided awareness among fellow Walla Walla Veterans Home & WDVA employees, who were challenged earlier this month for the 22 Push Up Challenge to raise awareness for suicide prevention and the estimated 22 people a day that are lost to suicide.

Around 17 Veterans a day are lost each day to suicide and in Washington State alone, there have been more than 1000 Veterans lost to suicide since 2014

We were excited to use this challenge as an opportunity to bring awareness to this tragedy AND provide some helpful information about how EVERYONE can do their part to save the lives of our heroes.

Sometimes anger and anxiety can be a sign of stress or mental illness.

Know the signs. #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else>

Check out the videos by visiting:

[www.facebook.com/wsdva/videos](http://www.facebook.com/wsdva/videos)

The screenshot shows a Facebook page for Washington State DVA. At the top, there are navigation buttons: 'Edit Contact Us', 'Promote', 'View as Visitor', a search icon, and a menu icon. Below this is a grid of 9 video thumbnails. Each video is titled 'WDVA 22 Push Up Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month' or 'Paisley the Pup Joins Our WDVA #22PushUp Challenge For Suicid...'. The videos show various people performing push-ups in different settings: on stairs, on a wooden floor, on a carpet, in a hallway, in a kitchen, outdoors on a sidewalk, and on a metal grate. The videos have varying view counts and engagement metrics (likes, reactions).

Video Title	Duration	Views	Engagement
WDVA 22 Push Up Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:39	101 Views	3 Likes
WDVA 22 Push Up Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:20	106 Views	6 Likes
WDVA 22 Push Up Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:44	102 Views	4 Likes
WDVA 22 PushUp Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:23	220 Views	5 Reactions
WDVA 22 PushUp Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:31	191 Views	1 Like
WDVA 22 PushUp Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:29	408 Views	16 Reactions
WDVA 22 PushUp Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	0:53	240 Views	-
WDVA 22 PushUp Challenge for Suicide Prevention Month	1:06	556 Views	-
Paisley the Pup Joins Our WDVA #22PushUp Challenge For Suicid...	0:22	511 Views	-

## WDVA Military & Veteran Community Resources & WDVA's Podcast

No one said Staying Home and Staying Healthy would be easy!

Your WDVA has put together some resources to help you and your family cope with the incredibly unexpected changes that we're all experiencing. I hope you'll find some time to explore these and take advantage of the amazing work the Counseling & Wellness Team has done. If you have any resources that aren't listed, please let us know and if you are interested in being a guest to discuss your WDVA program or another veteran resource, let us know and we will add you to the schedule.

### [Resources List - Military and Veteran Community Resources in Response to COVID-19](#)

This guide lists resources specific to our Military and Veteran community that may help us to get through the COVID-19 crisis. This may be helpful not only to you and your family, but may also provide resources to help you better serve veterans in the Veterans Homes and Programs.

### Subscribe to the [WDVA Podcast!](#) Now Available on Apple ITunes



WDVA Employee Mark Sullivan discusses what the Military Transition Council does, and how it helps transitioning service members gain employment.

If you have questions about the show, or know of a veterans program that would be good to come on the show, please email Bryan @ [vpc@dva.wa.gov](mailto:vpc@dva.wa.gov)

<https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-vcje-ec02b3>

Questions for the show? Contact Bryan @ [vpc@dva.wa.gov](mailto:vpc@dva.wa.gov)

<https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-bgvii-e4c040>

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## Washington State Named Community Impact Leader of the Year by U.S. Chamber

Washington state has been named Community Impact Leader of the Year by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes division for extensive efforts to boost employment for military spouses – a result of collaboration between the state's Employment Security Department, the Washington State Department of Veteran's Affairs and Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

Lourdes E. "Alfie" Alvarado-Ramos director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs; Alecia Grady, JBLM director of Personnel and Family Readiness; and Suzan G. LeVine, Employment Security Department Commissioner, accepted the Community Leader Impact Award at the Sept. 17 Annual Military Spouse Employment Summit.

"This award recognizes the incredible partnerships that make this work possible, from implementing the first on base American Jobs Center in the country which serves military spouses, conducting military spouse hiring activities, to expanding our employment partnerships through our Washington State Military Transition and Readiness Council," said Alvarado-Ramos. "We are thrilled to accept the Community Leader Impact Award on behalf of Washington State's military and veteran community."

READ MORE: <https://dva.wa.gov/news/2020/washington-state-named-community-impact-leader-year-jblm-waesd-wdva>

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## Rest in Honor AL - Statement on Walla Walla Veterans Home First

## Ever Resident Passing



The Walla Walla Veterans Home is saddened to share that the Home's first resident has passed away. Alphonse Benitez, Seaman 1<sup>st</sup> Class, United States Navy, was the first veteran to move into the WWVH. Our WWVH team mourns his loss and is grateful to have had the opportunity to provide care to this distinguished veteran.

~

Al was present on the teak decks of the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945 where he witnessed The Surrender Ceremony, marking the end of World War II.

Seventy one years later Al was the first Veteran to move into the new Walla Walla Veterans Home in 2017, marking the beginning of our journey in Serving Those Who Served!

It has been an honor getting to know and care for Al. Thoughtful as ever, Al donated an antique mirror to the Walla Walla Veterans Home and it will be lovingly displayed in the entryway of the Umatilla House where he lived and brought joy to countless other residents and staff.

~

05/18/1927 - 09/27/2020

Photo courtesy of Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, Greg Lehman

## Now Hiring at Four Veterans Homes Across the State

Are you a CNA, RN or LPN looking for a career that allows you to give back to your community and provide compassionate care to Veterans?

Contact [Recruiters@dva.wa.gov](mailto:Recruiters@dva.wa.gov) for more information or visit: [www.governmentjobs.com/careers/washington/?keywords=wdva](http://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/washington/?keywords=wdva)





# ASIA PACIFIC VETERANS ONLINE FORUM

10am-12pm, 30 October 2020

1-800-562-2308 or [www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov)

Receive Updates On:

- VA Benefits
- VA Claims
- VA Health Care
- Myths Abouts VA
- Ask the Wa Dept of Veterans Affairs Director

RSVP for Link: Lucas Bruner at  
[Lucas.Bruner@va.gov](mailto:Lucas.Bruner@va.gov)

[https://zoom.us/j/96004821204?  
pwd=cEtoNWFpcGZRR3pQWDVPRjJXdU  
REZz09](https://zoom.us/j/96004821204?pwd=cEtoNWFpcGZRR3pQWDVPRjJXdUREZz09)

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**WDVA Hot Jobs - APPLY NOW**

More Info: Please visit [Employment](#) to see the opportunities that we have!

You can also contact a recruiter at [Karimah.Ly@dva.wa.gov](mailto:Karimah.Ly@dva.wa.gov)

## King County Housing Stabilization Assistance for Veterans and Family Members affected by COVID-19 and the Eviction Moratorium (Expiring on March 01, 2021)

### King County Housing Stabilization Assistance Available

- King County Veterans Program (KCVP) has funding for housing stabilization services, in response to the crisis of COVID-19
- Housing stabilization allows for both rent and mortgage
- **Funds available are based on documented amounts owed, and maximum award is \$1,500**
- Veterans who have received rental or mortgage assistance in the past through KCVP or WDVA, but for reasons OTHER than COVID may be eligible for these funds as well

### Eligibility for Assistance

- Veterans, service members, and their families
- Already live in King County, Washington
- Are behind in rent or mortgage
- Are economically impacted by COVID
- Monthly gross household income (generally) at or below 60% of Area Median Income

HHold Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
60% AMI	\$4,180	\$4,780	\$5,375	\$5,970	\$6,450	\$6,930	\$7,405	\$7,885

### Required Documentation

- Photo ID AND Evidence of U.S. Military Service (see documentation guidelines for KCVP services at website: [www.kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/veterans/programs-services.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/veterans/programs-services.aspx))
- Copy of signed lease, which must also include evidence the residence is in King County
- Evidence that the household is behind in rent or mortgage
- Evidence that the cause for being behind is due to COVID-19 -- documented by furlough notice, reduction in hours reflected in paycheck, application for unemployment assistance or other government benefit, notice of business/employer closure, etc.
- Income verification through paystubs, award letters, stimulus funds, or other

### To Access COVID-19 King County Housing Stabilization Assistance Contact Us: WDVA King County Offices 206-454-2799

Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs Outreach to Military Families  
Cathi Geisler | [cathi.geisler@dva.wa.gov](mailto:cathi.geisler@dva.wa.gov) | 206-641-6865

Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs Outreach to Veterans Experiencing Homelessness  
Kelsey McGarry | [kelsey.mcgarry@dva.wa.gov](mailto:kelsey.mcgarry@dva.wa.gov) | 206-900-4785

*This program, and a portion of this housing stabilization assistance, is funded through the King County Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy.*

*For veterans needing assistance in Counties other than King County, please reach out to your County Veterans Assistance Program to determine whether assistance is available. Contact information is available at: <https://www.dva.wa.gov/resources/county-map>*



Hired a Veteran? Sign Up Today at [www.YesVets.org](http://www.YesVets.org)

After you've notified us that you've hired a veteran, we will contact you to arrange delivery of your YesVets decals, to be prominently and proudly displayed at your place of business.

Thank you for your support of those who served!

Visit [www.YesVets.org](http://www.YesVets.org) for more information and to sign up!



Every veteran makes a difference!

**OVER 5,000**  
**VETERANS HIRED** SINCE 2016

Let your customers know that you support hiring veterans.



## Upcoming Events

View our WDVA Calendar to stay updated with upcoming events to attend

### WDVA 2020 EVENTS

[TO VIEW OUR WDVA CALENDAR, CLICK HERE](#)

WDVA Web Calendar: [www.dva.wa.gov/calendar](http://www.dva.wa.gov/calendar)

WDVA Facebook Calendar: [www.facebook.com/WSDVA/Events](https://www.facebook.com/WSDVA/Events)

Please take a few moments and provide us with feedback to make us better in 2020 at Serving Those Who Served.

Your feedback is instrumental in the continued improvement of your Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.

To complete the survey, please visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020WebSM>



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