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WDVA Veteran Voices

December 2024

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**Greetings from your WDVA Director:
David Puente**

Happy Holidays from your WDVA!

As we embrace the holiday season, we want to take a moment to wish you and your loved ones a joyful and peaceful time. This season is about giving back, spreading kindness, and making a difference in the lives of others.



As we reflect on this season of gratitude and giving, I want to also extend my heartfelt thanks to each member of our WDVA family. Your dedication, compassion, and unwavering commitment to serving our veterans and their families are truly remarkable. This year has brought its own set of challenges, but your resilience and perseverance have been inspiring.

I am also deeply appreciative of the way our community has come together to support one another. Whether through small acts of kindness, volunteering your time, or simply being there for a veteran in need, you have made a significant impact. It is these gestures of care and solidarity that make our work so meaningful.

To the community and to our WDVA staff, thank you for being a part of our incredible team and sharing our mission of Serving Those Who Served. May this season bring you and your loved one's moments of joy, peace, and togetherness.



Struggling This Holiday Season? You're Not Alone.

The holidays can be a difficult time for many, and if you're feeling overwhelmed, please remember that you don't have to go through it alone. If you're struggling emotionally or mentally, reach out, we have Counseling and Wellness programs and resources and can connect you to a counselor.

To learn more about our Counseling and Wellness Programs and Resources visit, [Counseling Services and Wellness Programs](https://www.dva.wa.gov/counseling)

Take care of yourself and know that support is always just a call away.

Volunteer with Us at Veterans Homes

There's no better way to give back than by volunteering at one of our local Veterans Homes. Make your New Years resolution one of paying it forward and offering your time and support! Whether it's helping with an event, hosting



activities, or simply spending time with our heroes, your presence will make their days brighter.

To learn more about how to become a volunteer, please contact an Activity Director on our website by visiting [Volunteer for Veterans](#). Your time and generosity can bring comfort and joy to those who served.

Honoring Our Heroes: Veterans Day Recap



As we reflect on this past Veterans Day, we are filled with gratitude and pride as we honored the brave men and women who have served our country. From heartfelt gatherings to powerful events, the day was a tribute to the sacrifices and courage of our veterans.

Here's a recap of some memorable moments:

[Veterans Day at the Capitol](#)

[Veterans Employee Resource Group \(VERG\) Veterans Day Event](#)

[2024 Auburn Veterans Day Parade](#)

[Veterans Employee Resource Group: Veterans Day Recognition Event](#)

2024 Commander's Call with a visit from Governor Inslee

Click the photo below to view the Governor Inslee Commanders Call Video



Checkout the links below for photos and more videos of the event:

Photo Album: [2024.12.04 Commanders Call - Washington Department of Veterans Affairs | Flickr](#)

Gov. Inslee Video Message for Veterans: <https://youtu.be/e50QszHL6Mg>

WDVA Director David Puente Commander's Call Video Recap:
<https://youtu.be/XYLZFYIpnM>

WDVA News and Current Events

Public Invited to Veterans Holiday Remembrance at State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake.

The State Veterans Cemetery at Medical Lake will hold an annual Veterans Holiday Remembrance ceremony on Saturday December 14, 2024. The ceremony will begin at 12pm. The community is invited to place holiday boughs on gravesites following a brief ceremony. Boughs are available at the cemetery for \$15. Pets and the use of tobacco products on the grounds are prohibited.

State Veterans Cemetery
21702 West Espanola Rd
Medical Lake, WA 99022

To learn more about the State Veterans Cemetery visit [Cemetery | WDVA](#)

Call 509-299-6280 or e-mail cemetery@dva.wa.gov





Washington State Government Agencies Increase Purchasing with Veteran-Owned Businesses by 152% in Fiscal Year 2024

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is proud to announce a significant milestone in spending with Veteran-Owned Businesses (VOBs). State agencies have increased their purchasing with VOBs by an impressive 152%, amounting to a \$27.5 million increase in Fiscal Year 2024, compared to the previous three-year average.

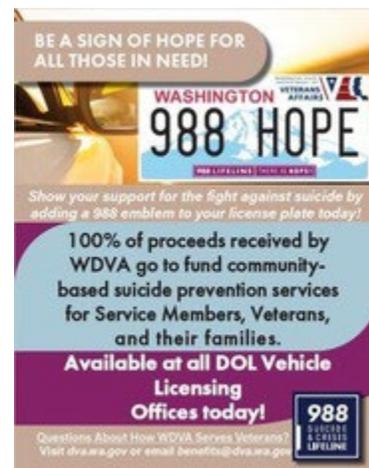
This remarkable achievement is a direct result of Executive Order 22-01, which calls for equity in public contracting and the creation of tools that foster equitable public spending. Through the collaborative efforts of WDVA, the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE), and the Governor's Subcabinet on Business Diversity, Washington State is enhancing access to contracting opportunities for all business owners.

Read more: [Washington State Government Agencies Increase Purchasing with Veteran-Owned Businesses by 152% in Fiscal Year 2024 | WDVA](#)

Looking for a unique gift or want to donate this holiday season?

This holiday season, consider purchasing 988 Emblems to support a great cause. You can buy multiple emblems at once and save by paying the \$8 fee just once! Show your support and make a meaningful impact.

Visit: <https://www.dva.wa.gov/suicidepreventionemblem> to get your emblem today!





Consider making a meaningful impact by donating to our Veterans Homes and the Washington Veterans Cemetery. Your generous contribution helps provide vital support and care for our veterans, honoring their service and sacrifices. Every donation counts, and together, we can ensure that our heroes are never forgotten.

Donate today and help us spread holiday cheer to those who have given so much. Thank you for your support!

To learn more about donating to Veterans Homes and the Washington Veterans Cemetery, click the links below.

[Donations to Veterans Homes | WDVA](#)

[Donations for Cemetery | WDVA](#)

Check out what's happening at our Veterans Homes



Washington Veterans Home

Thankfulness and gratitude started early this year at the Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard.

On Saturday November 23rd, residents invited their families to join them for a pie social. This was the first ever “Thankful for Family VETSGIVING Social”. You can tell by the smiles, there will be plans to do this again next year.

Special thanks to the Long Lake Garden Club, who created floral centerpieces for the event! In addition, residents put together some fall festive decorations to ensure that each

table was decorated!

Washington Soldier's Home

MusicWorks4Veterans Light up the Night at Washington Soldier's Home!

Thank you, [MusicWorks4Veterans](#), for lighting up the night with your wonderful performance at Washington Soldiers Home! Our senior Veterans had an incredible time with the fantastic variety of music and the enthusiastic participation. Seeing so many joyful smiles truly warm our hearts.

Congratulations on your 12th anniversary! Your dedication and passion for bringing joy through music is truly commendable. We look forward to many more MW4V Music Nights filled with happiness and community spirit.



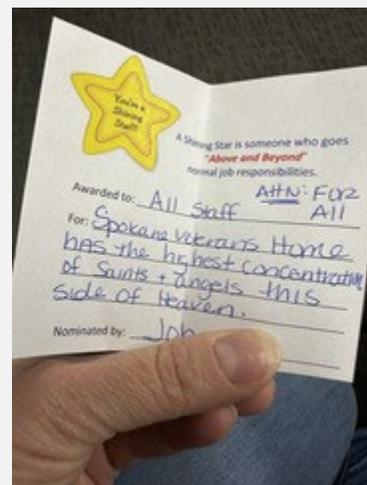
Walla Walla Veterans Home

Residents had a blast at WWVH's Pre-Thanksgiving Turkey Shoot—aiming for fun before the feast!

Nobody realized until the games began that this particular nerf gun shot 4 at once... A surprise that definitely 'triggered' extra fun and 'sparked' our Veterans' mischievous sides, resulting in multiple rounds of 'explosive' laughter.

Spokane Veterans Home

A Shining Star note to “All Staff” from a resident! Here at the Spokane Veterans Home, we have the highest concentration of saints and angels!



[WDVA Job Opportunities](#)

Hot Jobs - Incentives Available

Take a look at our [available opportunities](#) with WDVA!



Events & Observances Calendar

[Click Here to View Upcoming Events](#)

Calendar

< > today December 2024 month week day list

Submit an event for posting consideration. Submissions accepted will be added within 2 business days if your submission meets the criteria.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 09:30 Annual Commanders Call - 17:00 Circle of Return Veterans Council Community -	5	6 09:00 Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (6 CEs) - 09:00 Community Care & Support Event Celebrating Those Who Serve our Veterans -	7 09:00 Combat Veterans Motorcycle Club Christmas Toy Run -
8	9 15:30 MST Women's Circle of Return with Sarah L. Blum (Every Second Monday) -	10 10:00 Business and Stress Reduction Training -	11 15:00 TRCI Meet & Greet -	12 12:00 VA SAVE Suicide Prevention Training (1.5 CEs) -	13	14
15	16	17	18 17:00 Circle of Return Veterans Council Community -	19 09:00 VERG Monthly Meeting December 2024 -	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

[Submit an Event](#)

Program Highlight - Veterans Conservation Corp Program

From Chef to Teacher: My Life-Changing Internship with Grub Farm and the Veterans Conservation Corps



This testimonial highlights a Veteran who recently enrolled and completed our Veterans Conservation Corps internship. From Chef to Teacher: My Life-Changing Internship with Grub Farm and the Veterans Conservation Corps
Excerpt from Ronald Minschwaner's program survey and testimonial

In 2020, economics forced me to sell my beloved restaurant, The Rising Star Café. Little did I know that this setback would lead me to a new chapter, one that would bring me back full circle to my roots in the food industry, but with a twist. I found myself exploring an internship with Grub Farm and the Veterans Conservation Corp (VCC), shifting my focus from running a restaurant to teaching and leadership. This opportunity came at just the right time as I longed for growth in these areas while still staying connected to my culinary passion.

The Grub Farm internship immediately appealed to me because of its mission to empower students and young adults with the skills they need to transition into the workforce. As someone with years of experience teaching in the restaurant industry, I knew that leadership isn't about doing things "my way"—it's about fostering collaboration and building strong, effective teams. Grub Farm's approach to developing young talent through hands-on education was exactly what I was looking for, offering a chance to teach and lead in a non-restaurant setting while still holding onto my commitment to "farm to table" principles.

To read the article, visit: [From Chef to Teacher: My Life-Changing Internship with Grub Farm and the Veterans Conservation Corps | WDVA](#)

The Veterans Conservation Corps Program serves those who served by providing veterans with self-directed connections to the lands, waters, and communities in WA State. Learn more at: [Veterans Conservation Corps Program | WDVA](#)

