

2026 February Veteran Voices - WA Dept of Veterans Affairs

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Greetings from your WDVA Director: David Puente Jr.

2025's accomplishments and looking forward in 2026

I'm excited to share highlights from our 2025 accomplishments across Counseling & Wellness, Veterans Services, State Veterans Homes, and Support Services.

In 2025, your WDVA saw more than **700 individuals** complete LEARN suicide-prevention trainings, and we distributed **3,600 firearm locking devices** statewide. Our counselors provided nearly **13,000 hours** of care, and our Veterans Services teams supported **2,846 Veteran-Owned Businesses**, helped **90 Veterans** transition to employment, and assisted **70 households** facing eviction or foreclosure. In our State Veterans Homes, we completed **\$33 million** in capital improvements and reached a **95% census**, while Support Services modernization saved more than **40,000 hours** through IT efficiencies. Our State Veterans Cemetery served **860 families** and provided **final honors to more than 175 unclaimed remains**. The cemetery also received **\$500,000** to conduct a pre-design study for a new Tri-Cities State Veterans Cemetery.

These achievements reflect the momentum behind our updated **2026–29 Strategic Plan**, and I'm proud of the progress we're making together. You can read my full message and explore the complete *2025 Year in Review Accomplishments* on our website.

Learn more: [WDVA's 2025 Year in Review](#) | [WDVA](#)

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2025 Year in Review



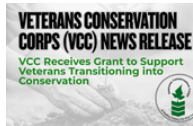
Counseling and Wellness 1,110 Veterans and families served 12,898 Total counseling hours through 29 Contracted counselors 704 Individuals participated in 75 LEARN Trainings in crisis identification and suicide prevention strategies 3,600 Firearm locking devices distributed \$21,907 Raised from statewide sales of the Veteran suicide prevention 988 "There is Hope" emblems, available for community-based suicide prevention efforts \$750,000 Grant received to Staff Sergeant Fox program for WDVA's fourth year running, and expansion to 15 counties 12,000+ Visits to the Definition of A Veteran webpage	20 Veterans enrolled in Veterans Conservation Corps Internships 1,063 Veterans and family members served at... 77 Brain Injury & Recovery events
State Veterans Homes \$33 Million Capital projects completed at Veterans Homes and Transitional Housing Program \$8 Million Received and used to purchase land for Spokane Veterans Home replacement 95% Census, up from 88% Building-specific Resident programming designed to foster a sense of purpose Gardening, ElderGrow and internal prog. Fostering dogs from Kitsap Humane Society Wellness, Arts, and the Military programs	Veterans Services 177 Transitional Housing Program Clients 142 Permanently housed Veterans 9 Served in Medical Recuperative Care beds Memorandums of Agreement 11 Tribal Veteran Service Officers (+3 in 2025) 23 Counties 23 Veteran Service Organizations 5 17,541 VA Compensation or pension claims \$3.6 Billion VA Benefits received by Veterans/families \$545,724 Funds raised through Armed Forces License Plates (Supporting State Veterans Cemetery and programs for Vets without homes) 90 Served with Veterans Innovations Program 77 Transitioned to employment 70 Assisted with eviction or foreclosure prevention 218 Served through Medical enhancement project \$845,000 To WA State 248 Clients served by the Veterans Estate Management Program 2,846 Total registered Veteran Owned Businesses (+26% 14% increase) \$43 Million State agency purchases/contracts with Veteran Owned Businesses ~\$11 Million In payments processed to support Veterans who are unable to manage their own finances
Cemetery 860 Families served 178 Unclaimed Veterans and families who received final honors 241 Pre-need cases approved \$500,000 Funds received to conduct pre-design study for new Tri-Cities State Veterans Cemetery	Support Services 716,319 Page views by 264,584 users on WDVA's public website \$200,000 IT savings with switch to Teams Phones and e-fax 40,000 Online engagements during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (Including QR code scans, website views, Facebook/LinkedIn impressions) 1125 Hours of processing eliminated by using automation to share information between Federal VA and SSG Fox Program

WDVA News and Current Events

2026 Legislative Updates

Curious about what WDVA is working on this legislative session?

Stay up-to-date with the [status of Veteran-related legislative bills](#)—sign up for our legislative updates email distribution list at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADVA/subscribe/new>.



WDVA receives grant to support Veterans transitioning into conservation

WDVA's Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) program will receive **\$438,140** to involve Veterans in hands-on work restoring degraded grasslands and turning them into healthy prairie habitats in the Chehalis watershed across Thurston, Lewis, and Grays Harbor Counties.

Since it began, VCC has connected Veterans with meaningful careers and community service in environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture. The program blends the leadership and teamwork skills Veterans gained during service with the ecological knowledge needed to protect Washington's natural ecosystems for future generations.

[Ecostudies Institute](#) recently announced **Phase 2 funding** for the project, titled *"Enhancing Biodiversity of Prairie Habitat and Economic Resilience of Rural Economies through Conservation Grazing."* This is a **\$2 million grant** from the [WA Coast Restoration and Resiliency Initiative](#), running from January 2026 through June 30, 2029. The grant will support **11 partner organizations** across the three counties.

Read more: [WDVA Receives Grant to Support Veterans Transitioning into Conservation | WDVA](#)

Video: [Internship Spotlight - Niguel - Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group](#)

Update to Tri-Cities Veterans community on the proposed Tri-Cities State Veterans Cemetery

The purpose of the pre-design phase is to supply WDVA with the necessary data to assess and compare the two parcels of land being researched and to determine the most suitable

option.

The types of things being assessed are:

- Site Constraints
- Buildings
- Land Use and Codes
- Sustainability/Energy
- Cultural Resources
- Accessibility
- And more



As part of the project, Carve Architects will also submit cost estimates through the state's Capital Budget System. This process is essential for budgeting and legislative development, ensuring all costs are accurately reflected in the budget documents.

Learn more: [January 2026 Update to Tri-Cities Veterans Community on the Proposed Tri-Cities State Veterans Cemetery | WDVA](#)

Check out what's happening at our Veterans Homes



Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard

Residents at the Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard are suiting up in their Seahawks gear and bringing the spirit of the 12s to game day.

With jerseys on and pride running high, these hometown fans are more than ready to cheer their team into the Super Bowl spotlight. Their enthusiasm is a reminder that the heart of Seahawks country beats strong across every generation.

[View more photos from the NFC Championship game viewing party](#)



Spokane Veterans Home

A Week of Hockey and Heart

Our Spokane Veterans Home residents enjoyed not one but two unforgettable nights of hockey recently. The excitement kicked off with a special invitation to a Spokane Chiefs game, where they took in the action from the Columbia Box—an experience that made the evening truly memorable.

The momentum carried on at Eagles Arena for another spirited matchup, bringing plenty of energy, camaraderie, and smiles. Moments like these remind us how meaningful shared experiences can be.

View more photos: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H1eJtiOK7/>

Washington Soldiers Home in Orting

Residents and staff at the Washington Soldiers Home in Orting had the Music Works 4 Veterans organization come to the home on January 27th to play music for all.



The home had numerous residents participate in a jam session and one resident took on the vocal duties by singing.

Our staff and residents always enjoy the music when the band comes to play for us!

Walla Walla Veterans Home

The Walla Walla Veterans Home continues proudly showing their commitment to hiring Veterans with YesVets decals on their windows and vehicles.

The Veterans Home Shuttle is also representing a YesVets bumper sticker, as we have drivers who have served in the military. Honoring Veterans isn't just something we say — it's something we do. #YesVets #ServingThoseWhoServed #SayYesToVets

[View more photos](#)



Save the Date - Serving Those Who Served Conference is coming to Wenatchee on 19 & 20 August

19-20 AUG. SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED CONFERENCE 2026

SAVE THE DATE

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS "Serving Those Who Served"

Employment Security Department ARTS WA

THE WENATCHEE CONVENTION CENTER
121 N Wenatchee Ave, Wenatchee, WA 98801

WDVA Job Opportunities

APPLY HERE: [View all available career opportunities with WDVA](#)

Build experience and serve Veterans with WDVA Work-Study program

Looking for a flexible, meaningful job while you're in school? Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs is hiring students through the VA Work-Study Program to help serve those who served. **Serve your community. Build your future.**

Who can apply:

- Students using VA educational benefits
- Enrolled at least ¼ time
- All fields of study welcome

Why apply:

- Flexible work schedules
- Non-taxable income
- Real-world experience and valuable skills



Learn more: email benefits@dva.wa.gov with "Work Study" in the subject line. Or call 1-800-562-2308

Events & Observances Calendar

[Click here to view upcoming events](#)

Calendar

February 2026

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

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	13:00 LGBTQ+ Veteran Allyship Workshop 1 of 3 17:00 ForwardGather: Veteran and Military Families State Injury Peer Group	13:00 LGBTQ+ Veteran Allyship Workshop 2 of 3 12:00 PAUSE Lethal Means Safety - Suicide Prevention Training	13:00 LGBTQ+ Veteran Allyship Workshop 3 of 3			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
			12:00 artREMEDY: Foundations of Art and Health			
6	9	10	11	12	13	14
						10:00 Nookack Tribal Resource Fair

To submit an event, please email communications@dva.wa.gov

Veterans Training Support Center - Upcoming workshops

LGBTQ+ Veterans	LGBTQ+ Veteran Allyship, Workshop 1	2/10/2026	1:00pm-3:00pm
LGBTQ+ Veterans	LGBTQ+ Veteran Allyship, Workshop 2	2/11/2026	1:00pm-3:00pm
Suicide Prevention	PAUSE Lethal Means Safety	2/11/2026	1:00pm-2:30pm
LGBTQ+ Veterans	LGBTQ+ Veteran Allyship, Workshop 3	2/12/2026	1:00pm-3:00pm
Brain Injury & Recovery	artREMEDY: Foundations of Art and Health	2/26/2026	1:00pm-3:00pm
Brain Injury & Recovery	Mindfulness Tools for Veterans & Families: Bridging the Gaps	3/12/2026	11:00am-12:00pm

Join us for the March 18 VAAC Town Hall and WVAC Women Veterans Forum in Woodinville

JOIN US!

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TOWN HALL & WOMEN VETERANS FORUM

MARCH 18

WOMENS FORUM - 8:30 AM
VAAC TOWN HALL - 10:00 AM

AMERICAN LEGION POST 127
21920 WA-9, Woodinville, WA
98072

Scan QR Code
or Email us for
the Livestream
Link:

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

ALL ARE
WELCOME TO
ATTEND

WDVA program videos



Check out the following Program Videos:

[Learn more about the expanded Definition of Veteran in Washington state](#)

[Support the Veterans Cemetery - Armed Forces License Plates](#)

Program Spotlight

Get certified: Washington's Identify Screen Refer (WISR) certification training

Be "WISR" in 2026: Washington's Identify Service Members, Veterans & Families, Screen for Suicide Risk, and Refer for Resources training helps healthcare and community providers give better support & services.

The no-cost, virtual, self-paced training encourages asking about military service, screening for suicide risk, & sharing resources like the 988 Veterans Crisis Line.

Learn more & get certified: <https://tinyurl.com/WISR-DVA>



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