

### 2026 March Veteran Voices - WA Dept of Veterans Affairs

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#### Greetings from your WDVA Director: David Puente Jr.

Last week I had the opportunity to join colleagues from across the country at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) conference, where state leaders came together to collaborate on strengthening services and support for Veterans nationwide.

I'm honored to share that I was elected Junior Vice President of NASDVA. It is a privilege to help guide the organization's work on behalf of state Veterans agencies across the country. I'm also proud to see Rudy Lopez, Cemetery Director with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, appointed to the NASDVA Memorial Affairs Committee representing the Far West District.

During the week, NASDVA leadership also participated in the United States House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and United States Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Joint Hearing on March 4, where national Veteran Service Organizations presented their legislative priorities to Congress. NASDVA President Terry Prince testified on behalf of state Veterans agencies. Other organizations presenting included Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, Wounded Warrior Project, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, and Mission Roll Call.

Conference attendees also heard from [VA Secretary Doug Collins](#), who reinforced the importance of strong federal-state collaboration in delivering benefits and services to Veterans.

I also had the chance to highlight some of the innovative work happening in Washington. In partnership with the [Washington State Arts Commission](#), WDVA secured a \$400,000 Wellness, Arts, and the Military (WAM) grant to expand creative arts programming at four Veterans Homes and two transitional housing programs across our state. These programs give Veterans opportunities to engage in music, painting, woodworking, gardening, and cultural outings that support healing, connection, and overall well-being.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside dedicated leaders across NASDVA who remain committed to serving those who served.

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**WDVA recognizes March as Brain Injury Awareness Month with tools of support**

Brain Injury Awareness Month reminds us that healing is not a journey Veterans should walk alone. By strengthening the connections between Veterans, their families, and our community partners, we create the support network every Veteran deserves.

At WDVA, we are dedicated to making sure every Veteran living with a traumatic brain injury has access to compassionate, informed, and coordinated care. This month is an opportunity to reaffirm that commitment and expand the bridges that lead to recovery.

The [WDVA TBI Toolkit](#) provides practical tools for Veterans, families, caregivers, and community partners to recognize symptoms, navigate services, strengthen communication, and support daily functioning and long-term recovery.

Veterans deserve care that honors both their service and their stories, and Brain Injury Awareness Month underscores the importance of providing support that is compassionate, informed, and accessible. Healing from traumatic brain injury is strengthened through connection—building bridges between Veterans, families, caregivers, and community partners helps address the invisible wounds that often accompany TBI.

**Learn more:** [WDVA recognizes March as Brain Injury Awareness Month with tools of support | WDVA](#)

## Brain Injury Awareness Month Toolkit

**Check out our TBI Toolkit:**

- *Educational Resources*
- *Support Networks*
- *Helpful Links & Services*
- *Brain Exercises and more!*



**Click here to visit  
WDVA's TBI Toolkit  
[dva.wa.gov/tbitoolkit](http://dva.wa.gov/tbitoolkit)**

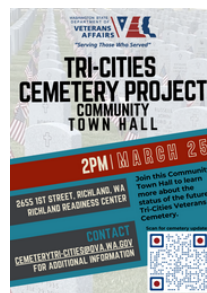
Of the 494,383 Veterans in Washington State, up to 98,000 are living with a traumatic brain injury.

**WDVA News and Current Events**

**Community Invited to Tri-Cities Veterans Cemetery Project Town Hall**

Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) will host a Tri-Cities Cemetery Project Community Town Hall on March 25 at 2:00 p.m. at the Richland Readiness Center, 2655 1st Street, Richland, WA. Community members, Veterans, families, and local leaders are encouraged to attend.

This town hall offers an opportunity to learn more about the future State Veterans Cemetery, Tri-Cities, to hear updates on the project's progress, and share community perspectives as planning continues.



Read more: [Community Invited to State Veterans Cemetery, Tri-Cities Project Town Hall | WDVA](#)



### 2026 Legislative Updates

As we near the end of this year's legislative session, WDVA continues to provide updates on the [status of Veteran-related legislative bills](#)

Sign up for our legislative updates email distribution list at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADVA/subscriber/new>.

**Pictured above:** *HB 1541 is signed by Gov. Ferguson on March 9, 2026. Photo by Conall Anderson*



### WDVA's Military Spouse Liaison Olivia Burley receives the 2025 Military Community Ambassador of the Year

WDVA is proud to announce Olivia Burley as the 2025 SHRM Foundation Military Community Ambassador of the Year. In her role as Washington State's Military Spouse Liaison at the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Burley – also a military spouse and active member of the SHRM Snohomish County Human Resources Association – leveraged SHRM programs and resources to reach more than 700 individuals in 2025. Her efforts advanced military-connected talent through statewide advocacy, employer education, and cross-sector collaboration.

Read more: [WDVA's Military Spouse Liaison Olivia Burley receives the 2025 Military Community Ambassador of the Year: | WDVA](#)

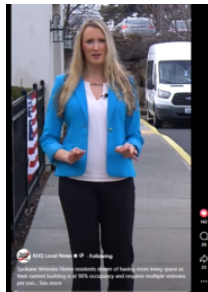
## Check out what's happening at our Veterans Homes

### Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard

The Veterans and staff would like to thank the artists associated with [South Kitsap Artists](#) who recently joined the Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard for an art show.



During the event, attendees spoke with visiting artists Kerri Garman Mueller, Cristine Hella Cott, J'louis King and Phoebe Siemion. Our residents enjoyed viewing the beautiful art and talking art shop with these artists!



### KHQ Highlights Future Spokane Veterans Home

Thank you to KHQ for highlighting this important conversation about the future of the Spokane Veterans Home.

Your Washington Department of Veterans Affairs appreciates the continued community interest and support for a new, modern facility that would provide Veterans with more living space, enhanced amenities, and high-quality care in a comfortable environment.

We are grateful to the Veterans, families, and community members whose voices help guide these discussions as we work to meet the evolving needs of those who have served.

Read the full story here: [https://www.khq.com/.../article\\_6d4758c1-99a3-4a85-a94a...](https://www.khq.com/.../article_6d4758c1-99a3-4a85-a94a...)

### Washington Soldiers Home in Orting

#### Winter Olympics fun at the Washington Soldiers Home in Orting

Recently, our residents showed off their teamwork and competitive spirit during the Snowball Toss Olympics-style event, where they enjoyed passing "snowballs" back and forth with plenty of laughs along the way. Every participant earned a medal, with special certificates for gold, silver, and bronze.



And of course, the grand finale was a crowd favorite, where residents joyfully launching soft snowballs at staff members.

### Walla Walla Veterans Home

Thank you, to Washington State VFW and Auxiliary Department Commander Drew James and 2025-26 Department President Robyn Sterrett for the generous gifts you delivered for the Veterans living at the [Walla Walla Veterans Home](#), and their families.



We look forward to sharing with our friends and community about how these gifts, and the donations from others, are blessing our Veterans' lives every day and night. **To learn more about how to donate to any of our Veterans Homes, please visit: [Donations](#) | [WDVA](#)**



### Transitional Housing Program

Veterans in the WDVA Transitional Housing Program (THP) at the [Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard - Retsil](#) are strengthening more than just their living stability - they're building coordination, focus, and confidence through hands-on activities that require concentration and focus (like LEGO

building and craft-making.)

These activities help improve hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and cognitive engagement — all important for recovery, rehabilitation, and daily independence. For many Veterans, practicing these skills supports everything from personal care tasks to future employment readiness and overall wellness. Just as important, these sessions foster connection, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment in a supportive environment.

Our THP provides short-term housing and supportive services for Veterans experiencing housing instability, helping them work toward permanent housing and greater self-sufficiency.

**Are you a Veteran in need of housing support? Learn more about the Transitional Housing Program and how to apply: <https://dva.wa.gov/.../veterans-transitional-housing-program>**

## WDVA Job Opportunities

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

**WE'RE HIRING**

APPLY NOW

RNs | Drivers  
LPNs | Chefs  
CNAs | & More

Make an impact and join a career in Serving Those Who Served!

**APPLY NOW!**  
Recruiters@DVA.WA.GOV

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

### Veteran Conservation Corps Current Internship Openings

Grays Harbor Conservation District (Elma)

- [Prairie Habitat Restoration Internship](#)

Lewis Conservation District (Chehalis)

- [Prairie Habitat Restoration Internship](#)

Thurston Conservation District (Tumwater)

- [Prairie Habitat Restoration Internship](#)

## Events & Observances Calendar

[Click here to view upcoming events](#)

Calendar

March 2026

month week day list 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
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	7	8	9	10	11	12
11:00 Minority Veterans of America International Women's Day Branch -			13:00 VA Health Care Orientation American Legion -	10:00 Quaiatl Indian Nation Community Health Program Community Health Fair -		10:00 Nooksack Tribal Resource Fair -
	15	16	17	18	19	20
			08:00 March 18 WAC Town Hall WAC Women Veterans Forum Woodville -	10:00 PAUSE: Lethal Means Safety - Suicide Prevention Training -		10:00 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Poweez -
			13:00 aRtEMEDy Trauma-Informed Strength-Based Practice -			14:00 Washington State Patriots Day -
	22	23	24	25	26	27
	10:00 LEARN! Save Lives - Suicide Prevention Training -			08:00 Federal Partners Coalition -		11:00 Five Veterans Vets Clinic -
				10:00 Preventing Veteran Suicide by Combating Stigma - Training -		11:00 VFW 3063 100th Anniversary Celebration -



### YesVets hiring program to celebrate 10-year anniversary milestone

Since 2016, the YesVets hiring program has helped employers hire thousands of veterans in Washington.

To commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of YesVets, the state's Employment Security Department, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs and Society for Human Resource Management will host a celebration event.

#### About YesVets

YesVets is an initiative between ESD, WDVA, SHRM, the state Department of Commerce, The state Military Transition Council and chambers of commerce across the state.

Since its inception, YesVets has helped more than 2,500 employers hire more than 9,000 veterans.

"Employment plays a vital role in a successful transition from military service and strengthens the entire military family," WDVA Director David Puente Jr. said. "Through YesVets, WDVA has also been able to help employers better understand the earned benefits and wide range of federal and state programs available to support Veterans."

Learn more: [NEWS RELEASE - YesVets hiring program to celebrate 10-year anniversary milestone | WDVA](#)



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



Learn more and stay updated with the conference by visiting: [Serving Those Who Served Conference | WDVA](#)

To submit an event, please email [communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)

### Washington Department of Veterans Affairs Hosts Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Ceremony

WDVA warmly invites Vietnam Veterans, their spouses, all Veterans, and the public to join us in honoring and celebrating Vietnam Veterans at a special indoor ceremony in the Columbia Room, Capitol Campus, Olympia.

#### Event Details:

- **Event:** [Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony](#)
- **Date:** March 30, 2026
- **Time:** 11:00 AM
- **Location:** Columbia Room, 1st Floor, Capitol Building, Olympia, WA

This event will call upon Vietnam Veterans to briefly share their personal experiences. We are proud to present Commemorative Pins to Vietnam Veterans and their spouses. For those who have already received pins, we encourage you to wear them with pride.

This ceremony is a heartfelt opportunity to express gratitude and formally welcome home those who served during the Vietnam War. We look forward to honoring our Vietnam Veterans and celebrating their legacy with you!

For questions or additional information, please contact [communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov).



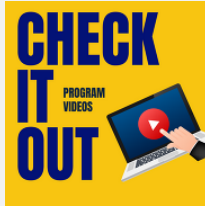
### Veterans Training Support Center - Upcoming workshops

<b>Counseling Program</b>	<a href="#">Battle Mind to Home Mind:</a>		
	<a href="#">Train the Trainer Workshop</a>	3/9/2026	9:00am-4:00pm
<b>Brain Injury &amp; Recovery</b>	<a href="#">Mindfulness Tools for Veterans &amp; Families:</a>	3/12/2026	11:00am-12:00pm
	<a href="#">Bridging the Gaps</a>		
<b>Suicide Prevention</b>	<a href="#">PAUSE Lethal Means Safety</a>	3/19/2026	10:00am-11:30am

<b>Brain Injury &amp; Recovery</b>	artREMEDY: Trauma-Informed Strengths-Based Practice	3/19/2026	1:00pm-3:00pm
<b>Suicide Prevention</b>	LEARN Saves Lives	3/23/2026	1:00pm-2:30pm
<b>Brain Injury and Recovery</b>	Stress Management and Goal Attainment Scaling	3/25/2026	1:00pm-2:30pm
<b>Suicide Prevention</b>	Combatting Stigma	3/26/2026	10:00am-11:30am

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

WDVA Program Videos



Check out the following Program Videos:

- [Get Connected - WDVA's TBI Toolkit is here to help!](#)
- [Washington State Armed Forces License Plates](#)

Program Spotlight

Women Veterans

March celebrates Women's History Month and your WDVA is sharing resources for Women Veterans. The mission of the WDVA Women Veterans Advisory Committee shall be to ensure that Washington's women Veterans have equitable access to federal and state Veterans' services and benefits.



- Connect women to their identity as Veterans
- Change the public perception of what Veterans look like
- Connect women veterans to benefits
- Connect women veterans to community

The committee provides assistance to women who served in the United States Armed Forces or in forces incorporated as part of the United States Armed Forces.

Learn more: [Women Veterans | WDVA](#)

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