

MVAA Annual Report Fiscal Year 2025



**Michigan Veterans
Affairs Agency**

We Stand for Those Who Served



Director Brian L. Love

A MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR LOVE

As the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) reflects on 2025, one theme stands above all others: the power of partnerships in serving those who have served our nation. This past year has reaffirmed a simple truth — success is never achieved alone. Through collaboration, shared vision and an unwavering commitment to supporting Michigan’s more than 486,000 veterans and their families, MVAA and our valued partners have made a lasting, meaningful impact to veterans across the Great Lakes State.

At MVAA, we recognize that every partnership strengthens the network of care and opportunity that surrounds our veteran community. Whether through strategic alliances, community collaborations or

innovative joint initiatives, our progress is rooted in relationships built on respect and a shared purpose. Partnerships with county veteran service offices, suicide prevention and mental health organizations, veteran service organizations and countless others have expanded our reach, enhanced our capabilities and deepened our understanding of the evolving needs of Michigan’s veterans.

This year, our collective commitment produced remarkable achievements. MVAA hosted the Michigan Veteran Leadership Summit in Marquette, bringing together leaders and advocates from across the state to exchange ideas and strengthen our shared mission. We helped secure more than \$100 million in recoveries for Michigan veterans and their families and will stimulate the economies of their communities, earned ASIST and safeTALK certification in suicide prevention and awareness training, and proudly honored more than 6,000 Vietnam War-era veterans through our



award-winning Vietnam War Veteran Recognition Certificate program. These accomplishments reflect the dedication and collaboration of our partners, supporters and stakeholders — all united by the mission of improving the lives of Michigan veterans.

As we look ahead to 2026, MVAA remains steadfast in its mission to build meaningful partnerships that honor service, inspire innovation and empower veterans to thrive. Together, we will continue shaping a future where every Michigan veteran is valued, supported and positioned for success.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Love
Director, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency



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MICHIGAN VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY

The MVAA is the central coordinating agency for Michigan veterans and their families, providing support, care, advocacy and connection to resources and services. MVAA was created by Executive Order 2013-2 and began operations March 20, 2013, the tenth anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The agency works to identify and break down barrier's veterans face in employment, education, health care and quality of life, making Michigan a great place for veterans and their families to call home.

The agency aggregates veterans services currently found in other federal, state and local agencies as well as hundreds of community-based veteran programs

to create a “no wrong door” access to benefits and services. These active partnerships are vitally important to achieving the agency’s mission.

MVAA serves all veterans including those who have traditionally been underrepresented or underserved. Direct services provided by MVAA to veterans include:

- **The Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center** (1-800-MICH-VET) and Michigan.gov/MVAA provide access for veterans and their families who are seeking information, resources and staff support.
- **Michigan Veterans Trust Fund** provides emergency financial aid to eligible veterans experiencing unforeseen financial hardship. Learn more about eligibility at Michigan.gov/MVTF.
- **Michigan Veteran Service Officers** serve as advocates for veterans and their family members



to maximize their receipt of available services and benefits.

- **MVAA's Discharge Document Retrieval Service** provides veterans with free copies of their DD-214 discharge documents.

Testimonials from People MVAA Helped in FY25:

“Prompt service! Very knowledgeable, made me feel heard and seen! Exemplary service.” — Harold W.

“Your VSO was very helpful and a pleasure to talk with. She is an asset to your organization.” — Stanley J.

Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency at a Glance



61 full-time employees



\$10,150,600
FY25 Budget



486,000
Michigan veterans
(2025)

- Housed within the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
- Agency Director Brian Love is a member of the Governor's Cabinet

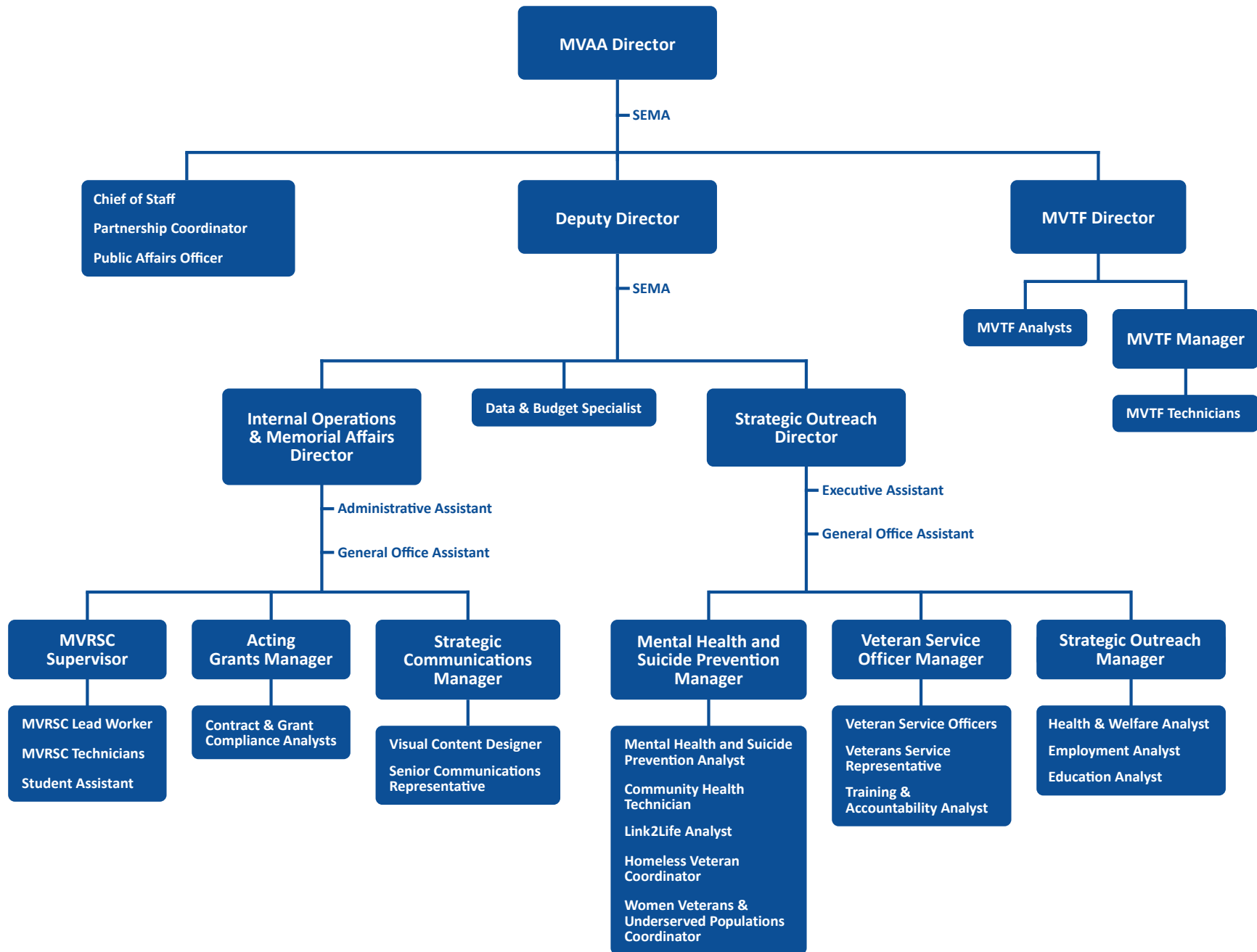


MVAA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

MVAA resides within the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), along with the Michigan National Guard, Michigan Veteran Homes, Michigan Youth Challenge Academy and DMVA State Operations. MVAA adheres to the DMVA's cultural identity that guides our beliefs, behaviors and organizational direction. The DMVA is a:

- **Provider of Exceptional Service.** A team of devoted public servants committed to its mission, continuous improvement and solving future challenges.
- **The Cornerstone of Michigan Communities.** Dedicated Michigan citizens invested as lifelong partners in building thriving communities.
- **Leader in Innovative Solutions.** A thought leader, piloting future capabilities and providing unrivaled training opportunities that leverage Michigan's unique blend of geography, people and technology-based industry.
- **Workplace of Choice.** A department that values its team members, demonstrates a commitment to individual and organizational development, and generates loyalty and pride across the team.
- **Center of Performance Excellence.** DMVA is a collaborative organization that provides ever-improving value to its stakeholders and achieves sustained organizational effectiveness.

MVAA Organizational Chart





MVAA STANDS FOR THOSE WHO SERVED

The heart of MVAA is our dedication to service for our state's veterans. The work the agency does every day leads to many success stories. Here are just a few from FY25 that illustrate the lengths to which MVAA goes on behalf of the state's brave men and women who have served:

- A 32-year-old 100% disabled Marine Corps veteran requested assistance with rent, utilities and cell phone. He had gotten behind on these bills after suffering years of debilitating medical issues that continue to afflict him. He was also sober for two years in his struggle with alcoholism.

While undergoing these challenges this veteran had also begun to care for and provide for two boys aged 15 and 14 as their mother was unable to care for them. He was not receiving financial assistance even though he had become their (non-legal) guardian. Assisting him through these challenges and helping him care for the children was the veteran's church and his AA sponsor. The church had been providing support in the form of clothes, food, part-time work and other assistance. The pastor has been working with the veteran to help with a budget.

The veteran has displayed unwavering dedication to these boys ensuring that they succeed in school and sports even as he faces serious financial

THE PEOPLE WE MET THIS YEAR



and personal hardships. It was an honor for the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund (MVTF) to come alongside this veteran and his faith community to help him get back on his feet with rent, cell phone and utility assistance. This helped the veteran to overcome the physical and financial setbacks that he has endured over the last several years.

- A veteran had recently lost his job and was unable to secure new employment before he and his 17-year-old daughter were evicted. Due to the lack of family shelters in St. Clair County, the Disability Network Eastern Michigan (DNEM) arranged temporary hotel accommodations for them with funding secured from the Michigan Veteran Homelessness Prevention Grant. Upon arriving at the hotel, the veteran secured a job but unfortunately lost the position after needing to call in sick. Despite this setback, he remained determined to regain stability. Shortly thereafter, he was offered another opportunity at the same hotel, where he is now employed in housekeeping and grounds maintenance. As part of his compensation, he receives a room at the hotel, providing both stable housing and employment. Additionally, DNEM was able to secure a bus pass for the veteran and his daughter through a separate program, ensuring reliable transportation. This comprehensive support enabled his daughter to remain enrolled in her local high school without disruption.
- A senior citizen veteran living on a fixed income was asked to leave their rental unit because the owners were selling the home. The veteran's son assisted him in locating a mobile home to rent. The veteran did not have the money for the security deposit and

first month's rent. Through the Michigan Veteran Homelessness Prevention Grant, DNEM was able to assist the veteran with pro-rated July and August rent. The veteran's son was able to assist him with the security deposit. The veteran was housed before the unit he was renting was sold, which prevented him from becoming homeless.

- A World War II veteran contacted the Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center (MVRSC) after learning of MVAA's DD-214 For Free campaign to request assistance retrieving his discharge documents. He had previously been informed by the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) that his record was lost in a fire. His primary concern was ensuring his family could receive a flag presentation at his funeral. Through MVAA's resources and efforts, the veteran's DD-214 was located, allowing him and his family to receive this well-deserved honor.



I Am a Veteran

Every Michigan veteran has a story, and MVAA is committed to documenting and sharing them through our I Am a Veteran campaign. This effort, led by MVAA's Strategic Communications section, seeks to motivate other veterans to identify as veterans, tell their stories and get connected to the benefits they earned for their service. Dependents of veterans are also encouraged to tell their loved one's story.

By directly addressing the issues our veterans face — such as PTSD, racism and sexism, difficult transitions to civilian life — MVAA is working to build a stronger community of veterans and end veteran suicide. If you'd like to submit your story, please visit **Michigan.gov/IAMAVeteran**, fill out the nomination form and send it to MVAA-Newsroom@Michigan.gov.

These are the veteran stories MVAA documented during FY25.

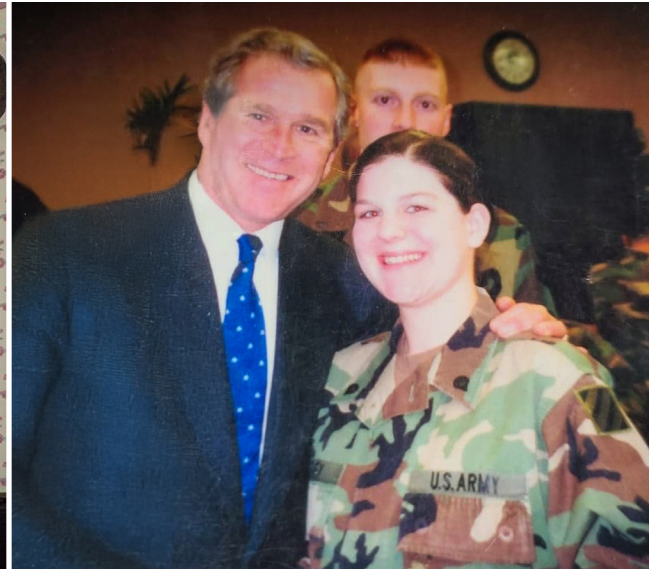
Army, Iraq War veteran Mary Levey: a military family's path to turning trials into triumph

U.S. Army veteran, Mary Levey, served 12 years in the military and one tour in Iraq. Despite facing mental health struggles, physical ailments and the challenges of being a single mother, Levey proudly stands by her decision of joining the military at the age of 17.

“As a junior, I had no idea what I wanted to do after high school,” Levey recalled. “I knew I wanted to get away from my hometown to really explore what's out there, so after a few conversations I decided to be a cook in the Army.”

While at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Levey became pregnant with her first child at the age of 19 and became a single mother. In April of 2000, her daughter, Kayla, was born. With a strong support system from her peers and relatives, Levey was able to take on her new role as a single mother while still serving her country.

Soon after, Levey and her daughter moved to Fort Stewart, Georgia, where she met her first husband. They would eventually get married, she would transition to the Army Reserves and become pregnant with their son. Then, another challenge was thrown in their path when her husband got notified that he



would be deploying to Afghanistan for a year.

When her husband deployed, she moved back to Michigan to live with her parents. Shortly after her move back, her son, Walker, was born in July of 2004. Just six months later, she received notice that she would be deploying to Iraq.

As Levey was deploying to Iraq, her husband was coming back from his deployment in Afghanistan. With the timeline of both of their deployments, they went over two years without seeing each other. Her husband went through this transition and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) without his wife. After being medically discharged from the military, he suffered with substance use and eventually lost his battle with PTSD. Levey and her family mourned the loss of the father that he could have been to their children.

“The older I got the more people were talking about the

statistics of veterans coming home and committing suicide,” Kayla said. “I then realized that my dad was a part of that statistic and that was really hard to swallow.”

“How the story was portrayed to me was that he got denied help and it makes me feel like the country betrayed him,” Walker said. “If he had that help then maybe he’d still be here, and I would’ve met him because I never met my father.”

Levey went to counseling for more than six months to help process the trials and mental health struggles she was facing after her deployment. Throughout this time, she began to process her emotions, step back into motherhood and acknowledge the impact her deployment had on her family.

“It wasn’t just me deploying, it was my whole family that went through that deployment with me,” Levey said. “I



think we sometimes forget the military child and what they go through.”

In 2011, Levey welcomed her third child, Kaden, while living in California. Three weeks after he was born, her second husband deployed to Korea. Shortly after his deployment, their final move back to Michigan, Levey officially discharging from the military and a marital separation, Levey became a single mother again to three children. However, she was determined to continue her path of serving others. After many obstacles and unexpected turns, she graduated from Central Michigan University and began working as a teacher within her mother’s alternative education program at Ovid-Elsie Area Schools. After her mother’s retirement, Levey took over the program.

It was a full circle moment for her in 2023 when she bought her new house, that’s right across from her childhood home. Through all the trials that her and her

family endured during her military service, they reflect on their journey with honor and admiration.

“My mom is a very strong person, and I feel so proud of her,” Walker said. “We’ve had a tough road, and we got through it together.”

“I’m grateful for the childhood I had even though it wasn’t easy,” Kayla said. “I’m proud of her and everything that she overcame and is still dealing with like the health struggles she’s got going on now.”

“I raised my hand and swore and oath to my country to defend it and I did,” Mary said. “If I could go back there’s probably a few things I would change, but I would still proudly sign that contract at 17.”

Marine Corps veteran Nate Jolliff: a Marine's perseverance through Parkinson's and a commitment to serving others

Nate Jolliff proudly served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1984 to 1988 as a rifleman, guard and scout sniper. Decades after his service, Jolliff's life forever changed when he was diagnosed with service-connected Parkinson's disease. Despite the diagnosis, Jolliff upholds a positive outlook on his journey and devotes his time advocating for veterans facing similar challenges.

During his service, Jolliff graduated top of his scout sniper class and was deployed to Guam, Sweden, Japan and Germany. In 1986, he was selected for presidential security detail during a visit from President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan.





After leaving the military at 22, Jolliff built a family, worked in construction and earned a college degree. More than three decades later, his life changed when he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 2021 — linked to water contamination at Camp Lejeune.

“I started to experience some odd things happening with my body,” said Jolliff. “One of them was a twitch in my right hand or I’d be walking down a hallway and trip over nothing.”

Initially unaware of the connection between Parkinson’s and his service, Jolliff saw a TV ad about Camp Lejeune and contacted the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He was classified as 100% permanently disabled.

Despite the diagnosis, Jolliff remains active and optimistic. He trains daily with Rock Steady Boxing, a program for people with Parkinson’s, and serves on the board of the Michigan Parkinson Foundation. In

2024, he co-founded the Veterans with Parkinson’s Support Group with Navy veteran Marc Trail, offering a safe space for veterans to connect.

“Many veterans living with Parkinson’s look to the Michigan Parkinson Foundation to help them get better or at least make the journey manageable,” said Jolliff. “It’s almost therapy for me to talk with individuals facing similar challenges.”

Jolliff is also a longtime member of the Marine Corps League Macomb County Detachment 154 and was recently elected senior vice commandant. In 2025, the detachment raised more than \$6,500 for veteran and nonprofit organizations.

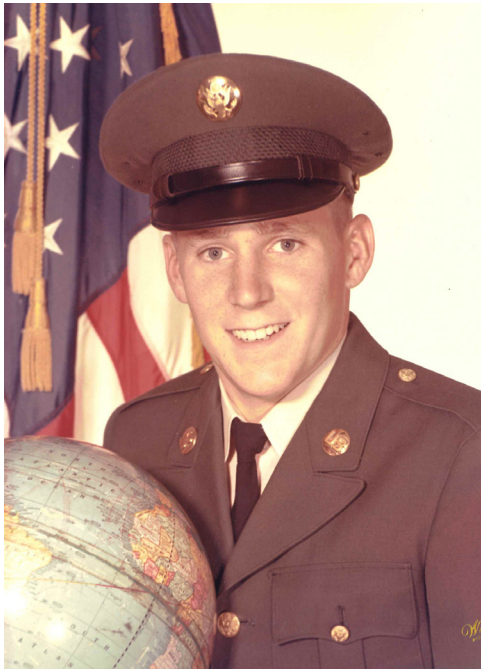
“I loved serving my country and felt like I was doing my part to keep the world safe,” said Jolliff. “Having a positive outlook can go a long way towards getting you through pretty much any challenge, but it’s more than just saying it, it’s living it.”

Army, Vietnam War-era veteran Michael ‘Flagman’ Bowen: Running for those that gave the ultimate sacrifice

Mike Bowen, U.S. Army veteran, earned his nickname “Flagman” after spending 43 years running across the country in remembrance of lives lost in war — all 78,000 miles, always carrying the POW/MIA flag. Despite three knee surgeries and a cancer diagnosis, Mike can still be found running.

After graduation, Mike followed in his father’s footsteps and joined the Army. In 1967, he volunteered for the draft and was sent to West Germany.

“I was a supply clerk in a huge warehouse complex suppling 12 battalions in the area,” said Bowen. “I proudly did my duty to the best of my ability and





returned home with no medals or ribbons to a much different country that we soldiers called ‘The World.’”

Before returning home, Mike would often read about the riots and anti-war protests happening back in the states, and how soldiers were being treated. When leaving the Army at Fort Dix, New Jersey, his sergeant advised him to get out of uniform before arriving at the airport. Mike politely declined.

“I served with pride, and I will not travel out of uniform,” Bowen recalled. “I’m proud to be a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving during the Vietnam War, even though I was not in war.”

After returning home, life went on for Mike with starting a career at General Motors, enrolling in college, getting married and buying their first home. However, he started to realize that something wasn’t right. Mike was experiencing survivor’s guilt, having

lost eight of his closest high school friends in the War. He often wondered why he survived while they did not.

In 1982, while visiting the Vietnam War Memorial Wall, Mike met a woman searching the wall for her son, classified as a POW, but thought he was still alive. The encounter moved him deeply.

“I was awestruck by the fact that so many Americans never returned, no body to mourn over and no closure,” said Bowen. “I decided right then and there to run one mile for every man classified as POW/MIA in the Vietnam War.”

Soon after, his goal shifted to running a mile for every name on the Wall. 31 years and 58,292 miles later, Mike finished that mission where it all began, in Washington, D.C.

Mike kept going — running miles for Americans lost

Testimonials from People MVAA Helped in FY25:

on 9/11 and in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has now run about 78,000 miles carrying the POW/MIA flag. Mike didn't embark on this journey alone. His wife Patty has been by his side through more than 50 marathons, including Chicago, Boston and New York spreading awareness about the POW/MIA flag.

"I have the best coach," said Bowen. "She's been my rock through the bad times and good times."

Patty proudly said, "He runs every single day no matter the weather and I'm always there to cheer him on and keep him going."

Beyond running, Mike connects with veterans and families in his community. He participates in Patriot Guard Riders, attends veteran events and honors the fallen at Great Lakes National Cemetery. In 2024, he was recognized as Veteran of the Year at the Michigan Military & Veterans Gala by MVAA.

Mike didn't pursue federal VA benefits until a cancer diagnosis in 2006, which he believes was linked to exposure to chemicals in Germany. His initial claim was denied, but he later received 10% disability. Now 76 and cancer free, he keeps running — hundreds of pairs of worn shoes, thousands of miles behind him and the flag always in hand.

"I still get out jogging almost every day and hope to until my heart stops beating," said Bowen. "We, as Americans, must never forget the many military personnel who did not return home from war."

"I am eternally grateful for your staff's professionalism and genuine dedication to addressing my needs. I felt like I was at the end of my rope and if not for your staff's calming demeanor, I think I may have given up. Thank you for putting such positive and caring individuals in charge of addressing the needs of people like myself. The MVTF is well deserving of all the praise and respect that is bestowed upon it." — Anonymous

"Your VSO was very professional and offered many tips while we have been waiting for the process to move forward. She was very good at following up with me or the VA if issues arose along the way." — Lynn R.

"I truly appreciate the support, it has been more than difficult on myself and even being able to discuss my service trauma with someone was a blessing in and of itself. I am indebted for all you do." — Paul M.

"Thank you just doesn't seem to be enough for your contribution of time, patience and knowledge in helping my husband and I in getting the help we needed through the MVTF. It is such a relief knowing we won't be evicted from our home and the electric will remain on. I want to commend you on the compassion and care you showed, when talking to me as you assisted in my getting the proper paperwork to you and the promptness in which you handled our case. We even had a good laugh a few times, which I truly needed!" — Anonymous



THE TEAMS WITHIN MVAA



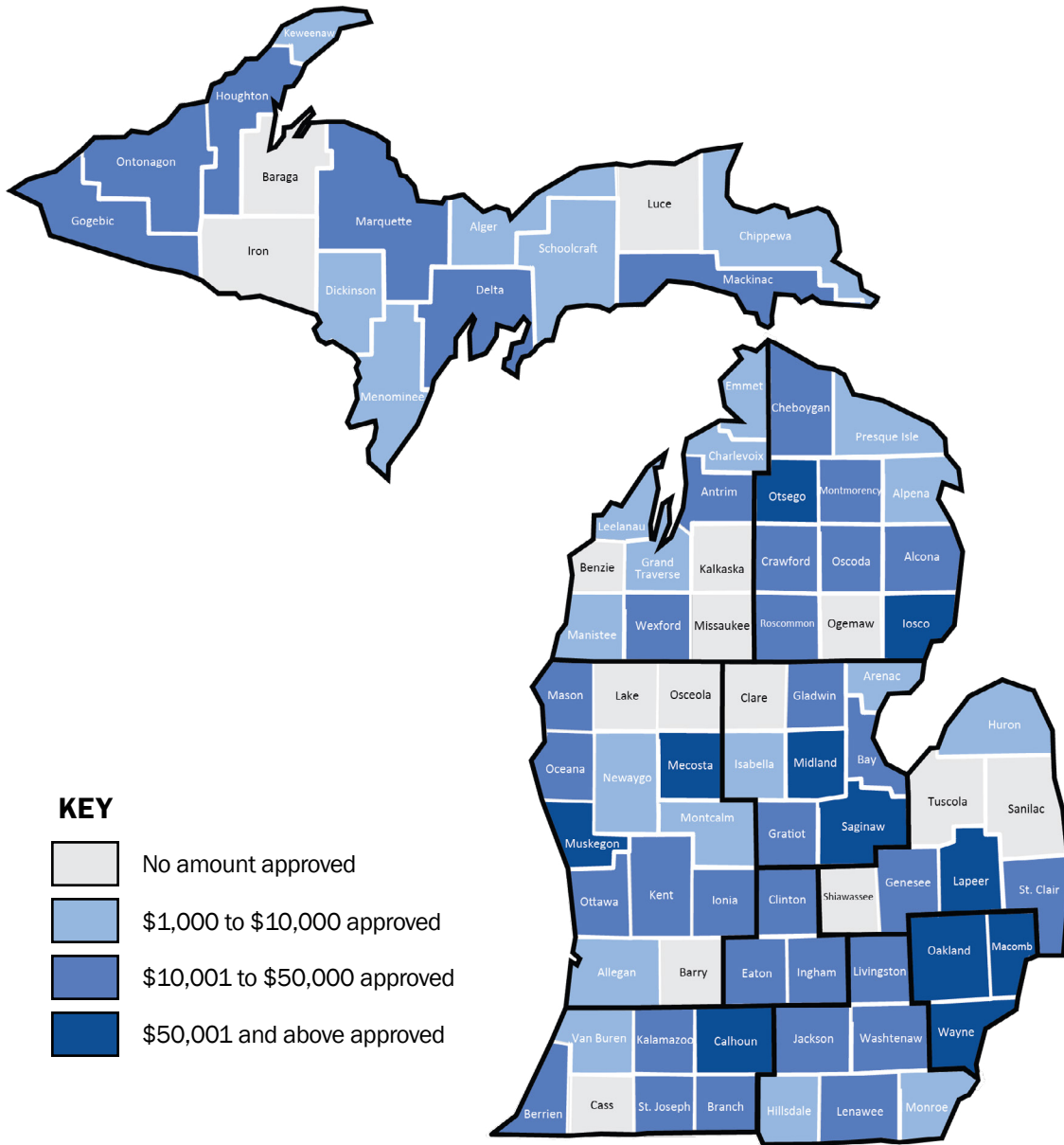
There are seven operational units within MVAA. Though they work together very closely to achieve MVAA's goals and execute the mission, vision and values of the agency, it is important to highlight the accomplishments that tell the story of each individual team.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund

FY25 Successes


For the first time in over a decade, the MVTF exceeded two million dollars in grants distributed on behalf of wartime era veterans and peacetime veterans aged 65 and older. This was done despite a nearly thirty percent decline in the number of veterans in the state since the last time that milestone was achieved in 2014. Notably, over that time, the average grant has increased by over 200% from \$1,151 per grant in 2014 to \$3,484 in 2025.

The MVTF received 911 applications in FY25, an increase over the 857 applications received in FY24, and approved 82% of the processed applications; up from the 78% approved in the previous year. As a part of the 65+ Peacetime program created by the Board of Trustees four years ago, 48 of these applications were for peacetime era veterans aged 65 and over. The \$2,017,443 in grants directly benefited 1,171 veterans and their family members to sustain housing, make emergency home repairs, keep heat and electricity services in their homes, and provided for other emergent needs.




Trust Fund Amounts Approved Per County in FY25

Counties with the Most MVTF Applications Submitted in FY25




Wayne	124 applications
Oakland	87 applications
Macomb	84 applications
Calhoun	62 applications
Saginaw	33 applications

Top 5 Counties Where MVTF Grants Were Distributed in FY25




Wayne	\$271,669.95
Oakland	\$207,343.88
Macomb	\$125,555.61
Calhoun	\$74,616.84
Saginaw	\$70,486.74

MVTF FY25 Stats



\$2+ million
in MVTF direct assistance



1,171 veterans & dependents directly assisted by MVTF



Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center

Supporting Michigan's Veterans, One Call at a Time

Every day, the MVRSC stands ready to answer the call for those who have served our nation.

In FY25, the MVRSC connected with veterans and their families 23,903 times via phone, helping them access everything from benefits and housing to vital discharge paperwork and state programs.

Seventy-two percent of calls were inbound, showing that veterans continue to reach out directly to the MVRSC as a trusted point of contact. Behind every call is a story – someone seeking help, information or simply a place that listens, understands and responds.

Top 5 Areas of Assistance



VA and Veteran Service Officer (VSO) Assistance

More than 3,000 requests, with over half related to claims.



MVA Programs

1,624 calls, including 1,332 requests in response to the Michigan Vietnam Veteran Recognition Certificate campaign, which honors Michigan's Vietnam War-era veterans.



Housing Support

1,327 requests, many seeking rental assistance to remain in stable housing.



Utility Assistance

1,245 requests, including 620 for electric bill support.



Home Maintenance

771 requests, with 131 veterans seeking help with roof assistance.

MVRSC Feedback

“Got my dad’s DD-214 in one week. Awesome people — thank you!”

“I assist families at a funeral home — your group is always so helpful in obtaining lost military records at the time of a funeral.”

“Way faster than going through the national VA.”

“Everyone I spoke with was friendly, knowledgeable and encouraging. Sometimes it’s hard to ask for help — you made it easy.”

“Every time I called, a real person answered — always helpful and nice.”

“The technician I spoke with was very informative and helpful. He listened to my needs and quickly provided the information I needed.”

“Incredibly helpful, kind and knowledgeable. They helped me after my father passed away.”

MVAA Grants Team

The MVAA administered \$18.7 million in grant funding to various stakeholders serving veterans and their families in FY25.

Funding Breakdown:

- **County Veteran Service Fund Grant (CVSFG):** MVAA administered \$4.2 million in state appropriated CVSF grant funding to county veteran service offices.

Grant-funded veteran services ranged from food assistance, transportation to and from VA hospitals, emergency assistance and dental services to veteran service officer continuing education.

- **Statewide Veteran Service Provision Grant (SVSPG):** This state-appropriated grant funding of \$4 million was awarded to the Michigan Veterans Coalition, comprised of veteran service organizations that coordinated providing more than 130,000+ hours of direct veteran service provision, far exceeding the grant requirement of 96,000 hours.
- **Michigan Veteran Homelessness Prevention Grant (MiVHPG):** The MVAA administered \$1.5 million to 10 nonprofit agencies to prevent veteran homelessness. The grant was used for immediate relief and emergency shelter such as hotel stays and rent or mortgage assistance.

- **Michigan Veteran Service Organizations Networking Grant (MiVSONG):** Through MiVSONG state-appropriated funding, \$9,000 was awarded to Michigan Community Action Teams to be used for professional networking opportunities for veteran service providers and advocates.

The MVAA grants team is now five employees strong with a continued focus on:

- Continued process improvement to better serve our grantees and veterans.
- Grant evaluation and monitoring, to reduce risk, ensure our programming is meeting legislative intent and help connect veterans to their earned benefits.
- Developing and implementing a new competitive Capital Improvement Grant for 501(C)19 veteran nonprofit organizations.

Strategic Communications

The MVAA's Strategic Communications team is responsible for the agency's marketing, strategic communications, media and public relations efforts. This includes the creation of in-house marketing campaigns, video and photography content creation and the creation of other marketing collateral such as MVAA branded giveaway items, swag and branded apparel.

In addition to leading these efforts, Strategic

Communications also provides ongoing support for other MVAA teams with regard to event planning and execution, the creation of strategic communications plans and the creation of presentations, briefing documents and other supporting documents for MVAA staff.

For FY25, the Strategic Communications team led the following efforts:

- **I Am a Veteran video series social media campaign**, which generated more than 4 million views during FY25.
- **DD-214 for Free social media campaign**, which generated more than 23.5 million impressions and views, driving a record number of veterans to seek this free service from the MVRSC. This included the first in-house creation of television and radio ads advertising MVAA, which were broadcast across Michigan in partnership with the Michigan Association of Broadcasters.
- **Vietnam Veteran Recognition Certificate social media campaign and postcard**, which led more than 6,000 Vietnam War-era veterans to request this certificate. This program honors Michigan's Vietnam veterans and officially welcomes them home, something that many veterans of this era did not receive. This campaign won a Pinnacle Award for Best Shoestring Budget campaign from the Central Michigan chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.
- **MVAA Awareness billboard campaign**, which was developed entirely in-house and generated more

than 5 million impressions during FY25.

- **New postcard in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)**, which seeks to encourage veterans and their families to reach out to MVAA for assistance while waiting for a benefits determination from MDHHS.



FY25 Social Media Stats:

9.9 Million Impressions
▲ 570% increase over FY24

More than 20.6 Million Total Video Views
▲ 1,273% increase over FY24

Facebook: Reach (Impressions): 4,436,364
▲ 430% increase over FY24
Followers: 13,713
▲ 7.6% increase over FY24

LinkedIn: Impressions: 106,744
Subscribers: 3,041
Engagement Rate: 3.0%

YouTube: Watch Time: 4,200+ hours
Subscribers: 813
▲ 11.5% increase over FY24

X: Followers: 3,387

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program:

MVAA's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (MHSP) team conducted outreach through 19 events and 78 one-on-one engagements. We also coordinated referrals from MVRSC, community providers and peer SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program grantees, building a robust referral pipeline.

During FY25, our program enrolled 23 participants. MHSP also received 160 referrals internally from the MVRSC, MVTF and the VSO team. MHSP provided 31 social service referrals, 11 mental health referrals and stabilized at-risk participants with coordinated financial assistance.



MHSP FY25 Event Activity: 122 Total Events

- Hosted: 3
- Attendee: 44
- Resource Tables: 38
- Speaking Engagements: 32
- Mental Health First Aid Trainings: 5



Attendance Impact by Engagement Type in FY25

- Events Hosted: 250 reached
- Attendee: 4,853 reached
- Resource Tables: 2,888 reached
- Speaking Engagements: 1,257 reached
- Mental Health First Aid Trainings: 120 reached

Case Highlight: Coordinated Support for Veterans Experiencing Housing and Employment Instability

This year, the program assisted multiple veterans navigating housing crises, demonstrating the value of sustained engagement and strong partnerships across Michigan's veteran-serving network.

In one case, the team worked closely with a veteran couple experiencing homelessness who faced barriers to communication, transportation and stable shelter. Through coordinated outreach, the program facilitated their referral to a veteran-focused housing provider while community partners helped secure temporary lodging, food, essentials and transportation during the application period. The veteran also received support preparing for employment opportunities while their housing application progressed.

In another situation, a veteran traveling to Michigan for newly secured employment experienced a breakdown of his RV, leaving him stranded and at risk of losing his temporary shelter. The program intervened quickly, negotiating with a local business to allow the veteran additional time before towing occurred. Community partners then mobilized financial support for necessary vehicle repairs and provided temporary hotel lodging and transportation until the RV was operational again.

These cases highlight the program's ability to:

- Provide **rapid, compassionate crisis intervention**
- Maintain **consistent communication and follow-through** even when veterans face instability
- Leverage **cross-agency partnerships** to meet immediate needs
- Support veterans in their pursuit of **safe housing and employment**



Collectively, these stories demonstrate the program's commitment to reducing barriers, strengthening stability, and ensuring veterans receive the coordinated care and resources they need to move forward.

Case Highlight: Cross-Team Collaboration Helps Stabilize a Veteran in Crisis

A FY25 case demonstrates the power of coordinated action between internal MVAA teams and trusted community partners to support a veteran facing multiple, compounding challenges. The veteran was struggling with severe medical limitations, financial hardship, housing instability and significant emotional distress. A concerned community member contacted MVAA seeking guidance, prompting internal staff to collaborate quickly to identify appropriate resources in the Grand Rapids area.

Through coordinated efforts, the team connected the veteran to Volunteers of America, which provided immediate financial relief by covering past-due rent and committing to assist with a portion of future housing costs. Additional referrals were made to help the veteran access VA mental health services, pursue disability benefits and explore remote employment options suited to his medical needs.

The community member shared that these coordinated resources "saved his life," and the veteran expressed deep relief at receiving timely support when he felt he had nowhere else to turn.

This case reflects:

- **Strong internal teamwork** and rapid information-sharing
- **Effective use of local partners** to meet urgent housing and financial needs
- **Holistic support** connecting the veteran to mental health care, benefits navigation and employment pathways
- **The impact of early intervention** in stabilizing veterans experiencing complex crises

Together, this collaborative effort helped the veteran move from crisis toward safety, stability and hope.

Other Wins:

- MHSP team members were trained in ASIST and safeTALK training by Livingworks to provide suicide intervention training and help create suicide-safer communities. Trainings will be available for veterans, service members, providers and community members in FY26.
- MHSP Analyst was appointed by the Governor to represent DMVA on the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force. MHSP was able to provide valuable feedback and policy examples from the Governor's Challenge initiatives and partners while representing the voice of Michigan's veterans.
- Information to reach the Veterans Crisis Line — "Dial 988 (veterans press 1)" — was added to

100% service-connected veteran hunting and fishing licenses.

- Continued to build on the Veteran Connector Program, with 370 Veteran Connectors in the program at the end of FY25. The Veteran Connector Program is a network of healthcare institutions, businesses and community members throughout the state of Michigan that helps identify members of the military community who may not have identified themselves as veterans, and ensure they are connected to their benefits.

Veteran Service Officers

FY25 Successes

- While assisting Oscoda County, the MVAA VSO spoke with a local Veteran Services board member who mentioned his spouse was bedridden. After learning he was only 20% service connected, she offered to review his file. The veteran, who served from 1966 to 1992, agreed but doubted any changes could be made. Upon review, the VSO identified additional service-connected conditions, resulting in an increased rating to 50%. This allowed him to add his spouse, qualify for concurrent retirement pay and receive more than \$10,000 in retroactive payments from the VA and Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) combined.

Further review revealed verified service in Korea during the Vietnam War and potential Agent Orange exposure, leading to additional claims now pending.

The veteran expressed great appreciation, sharing that the increase has relieved financial strain, eliminated prescription copays and provided long-awaited recognition of his Vietnam War-era service.

- A MVAA VSO met with a veteran who separated from the military in 2023 and was experiencing ongoing mental health challenges related to the hardships she faced during her gender transition while in service. Despite the lack of support she received at the time, she remained committed to seeking the care and recognition she deserved.

With the VSO's assistance, a claim was submitted in fall 2024, resulting in a 90% disability rating. A subsequent claim brought her to 100%. Upon receiving the final decision, the veteran expressed gratitude for feeling seen, heard and validated by the VA after years of struggle and perseverance.

- After a veteran's tragic death from a drug overdose, his widow and two children faced years of difficulty seeking Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). Despite multiple attempts, the claim was repeatedly denied because the death was not initially ruled service-connected.

Through persistent advocacy and dedicated support from their VSO, the most recent appeal was finally approved. This decision granted the family long-awaited recognition of the veteran's service and sacrifice, as well as vital financial stability. The widow received a retroactive payment of \$71,862.87, and the children are also entitled to benefits through a fiduciary, including future retroactive payments once the process is finalized. Additionally, the

children will receive Dependents' Educational Assistance to support their educational goals. This hard-earned outcome has provided the family with not only financial relief, but also the opportunity to begin healing and rebuilding their lives after unimaginable loss.

- During a routine file review, an MVAA VSO noticed that a veteran who had served in Vietnam had hypertension listed on his death certificate, a condition now recognized as presumptive under the PACT Act. Although the contact information on file was outdated, the VSO located and spoke with the veteran's daughter, who helped connect him with the surviving spouse.

After meeting in late 2024, they worked together to submit claims for DIC and an updated Service-Connected Burial Allowance. By March 2025, the widow was granted DIC benefits, including a monthly payment of \$1,653.07, a retroactive award of \$9,797.46, and an additional \$1,220 burial allowance adjustment.

When informed of the decision, the widow expressed how profoundly these benefits would improve her quality of life. An inspiring reminder of the impact of diligence and compassion in serving veterans and their families.

- When an 83-year-old widow from Marquette reached out to donate her late husband's wood stove to a local veteran in need, she never expected that her act of generosity would change her own life. While the VSO was helping her connect with local veteran organizations, a brief conversation revealed

that her husband, an Air Force veteran who served in Thailand during the Vietnam War-era, had passed away from lung cancer in 2008. She mentioned he was previously told he didn't qualify for VA benefits because he hadn't served in Vietnam.

Thanks to recent expansion of the PACT Act of 2022, service in Thailand now qualifies veterans for benefits related to toxic exposure. With this new information, a DIC claim was submitted and approved, resulting in a retroactive award of \$32,487.23.

What began as an effort to pass on a wood stove became a powerful reminder of how listening, asking questions and staying informed can make a lasting difference. Through her generosity, one veteran received warmth for the winter and she received long-overdue recognition for her husband's service and sacrifice.

FY25 MVAA VSO Stats



**\$6.7+ million
in recoveries**



**598 claims filed
5,143 supporting
activities**

Strategic Outreach

Veteran-Friendly Employer Program

- FY25 was the inaugural year of the Veteran-Friendly Employer (VFE) annual certifications. During FY25, 142 employers certified that they hired a combined 1,989 veterans in Michigan in 2024, maintaining an average retention rate across industries of 83%. The annual certification program was created to keep previously certified VFEs engaged within the program, ensure consistent communication is maintained and provide a snapshot into the success of the VFE program through insightful and impactful data. We look forward to future years of certification, to be able to compare data and learn how best to serve employers in attracting, hiring and retaining veterans.
- In FY25, the VFE program brought in 30 new bronze-level VFEs, three new silver-level and six silver-level upgrades, and five gold-level upgrades. The five gold-level upgrades were Henry Ford Health, DENSO, AlixPartners, the Michigan Gaming Control Board and the Michigan State Lottery. Combining annual certifications and new VFEs, the total number of Veteran-Friendly Employers now active in the program is 175.
- As of January 2024, there were 80 VFEs actively participating when efforts began to restore the program. With new employers joining the program and previously certified employers rejoining through the annual recertification program, there are 175 employers actively participating in the program.

This represents a 119% increase in VFE participation since 2024.



Veteran-Friendly Schools Program

Sixty-eight schools participated in FY25, a record number of post-academic institutions. This includes:

- Seven new schools from 2024–2025 academic year:
 - Concordia University Ann Arbor
 - Cornerstone University
 - Kirtland Community College
 - Moody Theological Seminary-Michigan
 - Sam Beauford Woodworking Institute
 - Suburban Truck Driver Training School
 - Western Michigan University Cooley Law School
- Four upgrades from silver-level to gold-level:
 - Bay De Noc Community College
 - Muskegon Community College
 - North Country Heavy Equipment School
 - Ross Education Holdings, Inc

Partners from the Michigan Army National Guard and the DMVA came together with members of the Veteran-Friendly Schools (VFS) network to conduct six regional benefits bootcamps throughout the state at Washtenaw Community College, Macomb Community College, Saginaw Valley State University, Ferris State University, Northern Michigan University and Western Michigan University.

These bootcamps provided valuable insight into how MVAA and VFSs can better connect military-connected learners to the benefits they have earned. These events were designed to meet the needs of some of the hardest individuals to reach — first-time benefit applicants and those with urgent issues that needed resolution in order to start college on time.

Health and Wellness Initiatives

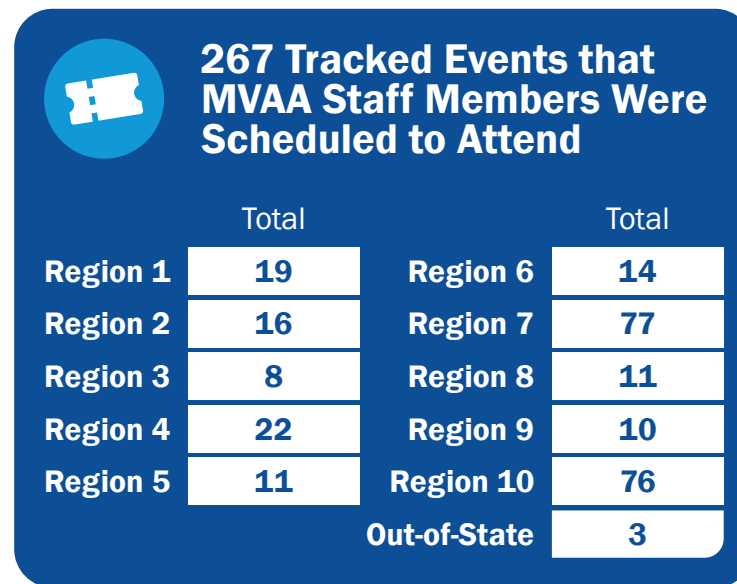
Over the past year, MVAA’s Health and Wellness initiatives have made significant progress in advancing the health and wellness of Michigan’s veteran population through strategic partnerships, innovative training and data-driven initiatives. By collaborating with organizations such as Michigan State University, MDHHS, Macomb Community College and the Michigan Health & Hospital Association, the MVAA has strengthened the bridge between healthcare systems and the veteran community.

Through programs like the Military Cultural Awareness Training, Military Mindset Training series and the “Have You Served?” initiative, the agency has increased cultural competence, improved communication between veterans and providers and enhanced identification of veterans within healthcare

systems statewide. The integration of veterans as a priority population in the Social Drivers of Health initiative further ensures that social, economic and environmental factors affecting veteran health are recognized and addressed.

MVAA’s efforts have also extended inward, with the successful launch of the Employee Recognition Program, fostering a culture of appreciation, excellence and teamwork that supports MVAA’s mission from within.

Looking ahead, MVAA remains committed to sustaining and expanding these efforts — leveraging partnerships, education and innovation to ensure that every Michigan veteran and family member has access to the care, respect and support they have earned through service.



EDITOR’S NOTE: See State of Michigan Prosperity Regions map on page 33.



HOW YOU CAN HELP



The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency helps a population of more than 486,000 veterans and their families. With only 61 full-time employees and a budget of just \$9.5 million in FY26, we cannot possibly complete this mission alone. If you would like to get involved, here are a few ways you can support MVAA in our mission:

- Share our social media content on LinkedIn, X and Facebook.
- Sign up to receive our newsletters and press releases at bit.ly/MVAANewsletter.
- Share 1-800-MICH-VET with everyone in your community and network.
- Sign up to participate in the MVAA Buddy to Buddy program. To learn more, visit Michigan.gov/MVAAB2B.
- Encourage your employer to become a Veteran Connector or Veteran-Friendly Employer.
- Become active in your Veterans Community Action Team (VCAT). Learn more at bit.ly/MichiganVCAT.



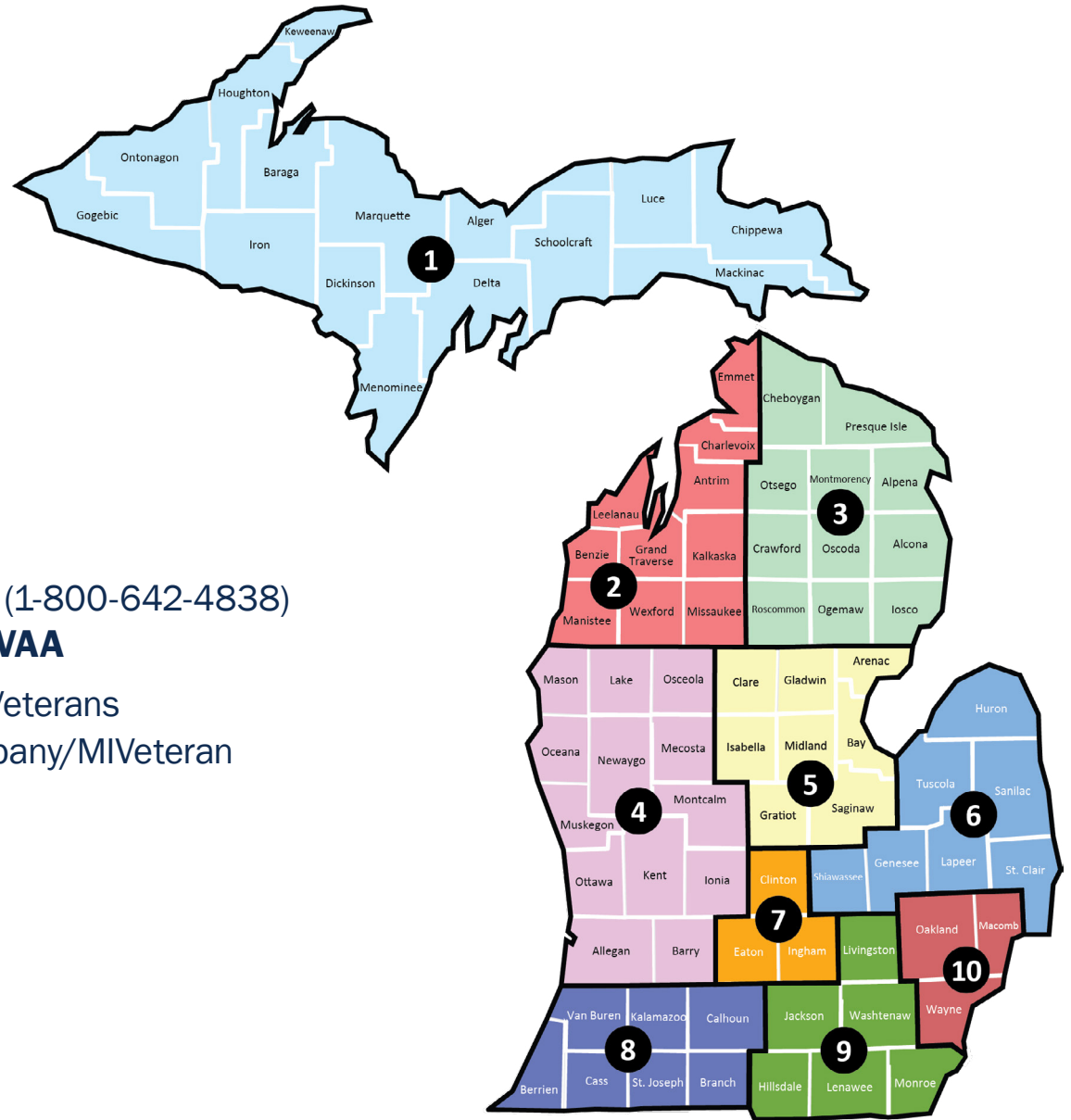
1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-642-4838)

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State of Michigan Prosperity Regions



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