

**Vol.3, No.3**  
**March 2024**

# **Serving Those Who Served**

**The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs**



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## Commissioner's Corner

### Commissioner's Corner

Greetings teammates,

In a blink of an eye, we find ourselves three months into the new year! And KDVA continues to move forward in "lighting-strike" fashion in providing the best care and services for our fellow Commonwealth veterans and their families. Along with balancing our day-to-day high "optempo" operations across the Commonwealth, and especially during the shortest month of the year, KDVA was able to execute several successful joint endeavors with national and state strategic partners. Such events included "A Veterans Forum" in Ashland, Kentucky with the VA Center for Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships, a regional VA Claims Clinic in eastern Kentucky, and Homeless Veterans Standdown with state and local community partners. In addition, our agency participated in two national leadership conference, the Kentucky State Chamber's inaugural "Military Hiring Academy", Ft. Campbell's VA Clinic Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and several African American History Month events/forums. We also notched a few awards or recognition during that time --- receiving our fourth straight Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award as well as three of veterans centers recognized as one of the best nursing homes in the nation US News and World Report. February was a great month for KDVA!!!



As we enter March, we continue keep up the high “optempo” pace. You will see more KDVA events like our claim’s clinic as well as our continuing presence at ceremonies marking events or holidays like National Vietnam Veterans Day. But also, we will plan to take the time to celebrate a long tradition of women who have made our Commonwealth a better place to live. Kentucky honors the tremendous sacrifices our women in uniform have made to defend our Nation. The valor and devotion to duty demonstrated by current and past service-women have paved the way for future generations. To kick off this month, on March 2nd, our KY Women Veterans Program is holding an event called: "She is a Veteran." This is an activity and information focused event to both inform our women veterans of services and resources available to them and to connect with one another while participating in a "Sip and Paint" activity.

KDVA continues to honor the service and accomplishments of women and women veterans in March and throughout the year. To the 27,000+ women veterans of the Commonwealth, we salute you and your courage, and we thank you for your service.

HOOAH!!!!,

***Commissioner Whitney P. Allen, Jr.***  
*Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs*

## **Latest VA News**

**VA proposes rule to extend presumed areas of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides, making it easier for exposed Veterans to receive their earned benefits**

The Department of Veterans Affairs issued a proposed rule outlining plans to expand the locations and time frames for which VA presumes exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. If this proposed rule becomes final, VA will implement a new presumption of exposure to locations where herbicides were tested, used, or stored outside of Vietnam. Specifically, this proposed rule would add locations in the United States ([full list of US locations where Agent Orange was tested or stored](#)), [Canada](#), and [India](#) to the existing presumptives for Agent Orange in Vietnam, Cambodia, Johnson Atoll, Guam, American Samoa, Korea, Laos, and Thailand.

A presumption of exposure means that VA automatically assumes that Veterans who served in certain locations were exposed to certain toxins. Presumptives lower the burden of proof required to receive disability benefits, helping Veterans get the benefits they deserve as quickly as possible. This expansion of presumptives will help Veterans who served in the specified locations receive health care and benefits for [certain cancers and chronic conditions](#). To be eligible, a Veteran must have served in the identified location(s) during a specific time period and currently have a condition(s) presumptively associated with herbicide exposure.

Delivering world-class health care and benefits to toxic-exposed Veterans is a top priority for VA and the Biden-Harris Administration. As a part of President Biden's pledge to serve Veterans with military toxic exposures, over the past few years, VA has expanded presumptive service connection for more than [hundreds of health conditions](#) related to toxic exposures under the [PACT Act](#) – the [largest expansion of Veteran care and benefits in generations](#). Thanks to this historic action, VA is delivering [more care and more benefits to more Veterans](#) than ever before in U.S. history.

“This proposed change would make it easier for Veterans exposed to herbicides who served outside Vietnam to access the benefits they so rightly deserve,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “Our goal is to provide every Veteran – of every era – with the VA health care and benefits they deserve, and this is another step in the right direction.”

Veterans who want to file an initial claim for a herbicide-related disability can visit [VA's website](#), use [VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits](#), or work with a VA-recognized [Veterans Service Organization](#) to assist with the application process. Veterans may also contact their [state Veterans Affairs Office](#). [Survivors](#) can file claims for benefits based on the Veteran's service if the Veteran died from at least one of the recognized presumptive herbicide diseases.

This proposed rule also codifies provisions in the [PACT Act](#), the [Blue Water Navy Act of 2019](#), and the [National Defense Authorization Act for 2021](#).

For more information about the changes, visit [The Federal Register](#).

## Upcoming Events

She is a Mom, She is a Wife, She is a Daughter,  
She is a Friend, She is a Coworker...

# "She is a Veteran"

## *Celebrating History of Women Veterans*

Guest Speakers  
2 Hour Painting Session  
And more to come...

**Save the Date**

**March 2, 2024**

**9AM to 5PM**

**Hardin Post 113 1251 Ring Rd  
Elizabethtown, KY, 42701**



You can RSVP on eventbrite [here](#).

If you're a woman veteran and would like to learn more about the program and events please join the private Kentucky Women Veterans Facebook Group pinned at the top of our Facebook Page. Click [here](#) to join.

## KDVA Veterans Claims Clinic



## KDVA Veterans Claims Clinic

This is an opportunity for veterans and families to file claims for veterans disability compensation, non-service connected pensions, survivor benefits, healthcare, and educational benefits.

**\*All services provided by  
KDVA are FREE \***

**March 6, 2024  
10:00 AM to 6:00PM**

Perry County Public Library  
285 Black Gold Blvd.  
Hazard, KY 41701

**PLEASE BRING**

**DD214**

**MEDICAL  
RECORDS**

**MARRIAGE  
LICENSE**

**SOCIAL SECURITY  
NUMBERS**



KDVA Veterans Claims Clinic  
March 6, 2024  
10AM-6PM

Perry County Public Library  
285 Black Gold Blvd. Hazard, KY 41701

This is an opportunity for veterans and families to file claims for veterans disability compensation, non-service connected pensions, survivor benefits, healthcare, and educational benefits.

PLEASE BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

DD214

Medical Records

Marriage License

**Veterans And First Responders**  
**Horse Activity Day March 16, 2024 12 to 3pm**

**BRING YOUR FAMILY!**

**LUNCH  
INCLUDED!**



**HorseSensing**  
**270 Bagdad Road**  
**Shelbyville, Ky 40065**  
**Reach out to**  
**650-776-4313 or [info@horsesensing.com](mailto:info@horsesensing.com)**

# HERE.IS.BETTER.

MOVIE SHOWING &  
PTSD AND SUICIDE AWARENESS TOPIC DISCUSSION

HOSTED BY  
**DAV CHAPTER 003**  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

*Pritchard Community Center  
404 S Mulberry St, Elizabethtown, KY 42701*

**DATE: WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 20, 2024**

**TIME: 5:30 PM**

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**



Pritchard Community Center  
404 S Mulberry Street, Elizabethtown, KY 42701



**Service Members, Veterans and Families Resource  
Outreach Family and Friends of Veterans and Widows**

Community and Faith Based Leaders introduction to:  
***The Veteran Program Trust Fund***

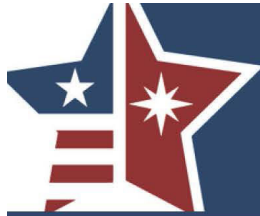
Focus on Benefits and services available to veterans and families

*Lunch will  
be provided*



**Thursday March 21, 2024  
9AM to 3PM**

Whitley County  
Williamsburg Tourism Center  
650 South 10th Street  
Williamsburg KY 40769



# Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

## SUICIDE AWARENESS AND LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

### 2024 REGIONAL SUMMITS

*all taking place from 9am-3pm local time*

February 27th, 2024

Central Kentucky

109 Grande Ave. Somerset, KY 42501

or

March 28th, 2024

Western Kentucky

8000 Cairo Rd Paducah, KY 42086

or

April 18th, 2024

Northern Kentucky

860 Dolwick Drive Erlanger, KY 41018

#### TARGET AUDIENCE

Family and friends of SMVF individuals, Community Leaders, Healthcare Professionals and Paraprofessionals

#### OUR VISION

##### Discussions and Insights

- Host a Lethal Means Summit
- Train providers on military, cultural competency, and counseling on access to lethal means

#### THE AGENDA

8:45a-9:00a  
Arrival and Check-In

9:00a-9:10a  
Welcome and Introductions

9:10a-10:00 a  
Military Culture

10:10a-10:50a  
Suicide Risk and Protective Factors

11:00a-11:50a  
Lethal Means Safety Counseling

11:50a-1:15p  
Lunch (on your own)

1:15p-1:30p  
Welcome Back and Overview

1:35p-2:45p  
Community Conversations (EKU)  
Application of what we learned

2:45p-3:00p  
Closure and Evaluations

Register by Scanning QR Code

Free



To register, please use the QR Code in the flier or use the button below. If you are having trouble registering with either click the link [here](#) instead.

Register Here

# What's New at KDVA?

## "A Veteran's Forum" Ashland, KY





KDVA in partnership with the VA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) hosted "A Veteran's Forum" on February 24, 2024, in Ashland, KY. This event offered several resources and discussions to veterans including small business startups, suicide prevention, KDVA and VA benefits available to them and how to apply for them, and more. During the event there were clothing and cold weather giveaways to veterans, free haircuts, and several tables with information on various resources available to veterans.

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## **Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award 2023**

The Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs has been awarded the 2024 Department of Veterans Affairs Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award for the Veterans Red-Carpet Welcome Home Program innovative state program. This program is in place to give veterans arriving to become residents at our veteran centers a warm welcome and a means of integrating them to their new community at the center.

VA Secretary McDonough presented Commissioner Allen the award at the 2024 National Association of State Directors of Veteran Affairs Mid Winter Conference in Arlington, VA.



## NASDVA Mid-Winter Conference.

Commissioner Allen receives 2024 VA Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award from VA Secretary McDonough.



Commissioner Allen attended the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) in Arlington, VA from February 11-15, 2024. Purpose of the conference is to allow state veterans affairs executive leaders to come together to discuss key national, state and local veterans issues.



(Pictures courtesy of NASDVA)

## Meghan Smith: *A Woman Veteran's Story*

Meghan Smith: A Woman Veteran



## NASVH





National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) Past President Mark Bowman meets with VA Secretary McDonough to discuss challenges that state veterans homes are facing as well as top priorities requiring the VA's collaboration.

## **African American Veterans Breakfast**



Deputy Commissioner Juan Renaud spoke during the African-American Veterans Breakfast this morning in Louisville at the Kentucky Center for African-American Heritage. He spoke about the importance of recognizing African American Veterans contributions in our various branches of service and their continued service in their communities and across the Commonwealth.

## Women Veterans Outreach



Dina Parrott, KDVA Women Veterans Program Coordinator, held an outreach event at Ft Campbell post at the AUSA office, February 13, 2024 in Kentucky. The event had discussion on women veterans issues such as Women Veterans married to Active Duty spouses and how women lose their identity to their Active Duty spouse, transition concerns, and serving after convalescence leave due to birth of first child. Part of the outreach is to bring awareness of women veterans concerns and to talk about benefits available to them.





On Feb. 23, 2024, Dina Parrott, KDVA's Women Veterans Coordinator cooked and served food to local veterans at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 680 in Lexington, KY.

## KY Veterans Higher Education Interest Survey

KDVA and the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) are interested in helping our veteran community understand their educational benefits. Research has shown that a workforce certificate or college degree can significantly increase your annual wages. Additionally, there are a number of programs to help veterans gain these types of certifications and degree programs. Your input will help us assist veterans across the state. Your feedback is very important.

Click on the button below or click [here](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Veteran_Survey) to participate in the brief survey.  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Veteran\\_Survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Veteran_Survey)

Survey

# Kentucky Military Youth T-Shirt Design Contest

**DUE March 29, 2024**

**THEME: Military Kid Strong!** Create a t-shirt design that celebrates the strength and resilience of military-connected youth.

**WINNERS RECEIVE UP TO \$100 GIFT CARD**

**ALL ENTRIES RECEIVE FREE SWAG**

Scan QR for contest rules and to enter or visit <https://forms.gle/XwVNveSjvU6Bfh8C6>

**Help Us Redesign the Current Purple Star Award T-Shirt!**



The winning T-shirt designs will be available to schools for printing



**Questions?**

**Email [sarah.flowers@ky.gov](mailto:sarah.flowers@ky.gov)**

**Visit [kypurplestar.org](http://kypurplestar.org)**

**Facebook.com/[kypurplestaraward](https://www.facebook.com/kypurplestaraward)**



This year the Department for Behavioral Health is inviting all military-connected youth in Kentucky to submit a design for the new "Purple Star Tee shirt" to represent and celebrate military children. The winner will receive a \$100 gift card AND get to see their design printed on the shirts!

The deadline for submissions is March 29th. The contest is open to any child of an active-duty service member or veteran. The Purple Star Award is a state-sponsored recognition for individual schools' dedication and support of military connected youth. The mission of

the Purple Star Award Program is to instill a sense of connection and strengthen resilience within Kentucky's military- connected youth. The Purple Star Award designation lets military parents know, whether they are on active duty or in the National Guard and Reserves, that a school is dedicated to helping their child gain the educational skills necessary to be college-, workforce- and life-ready. The program is supported by the US Department of Defense, Military Child Education Coalition and the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission and currently 33 US states implement the program in their schools and school districts.



## I Support Veterans License Plates



### Who is eligible

Any owner of a noncommercial motor vehicle required to be registered for use on Kentucky Highways.

### Steps Requirement

Application must be made at your local County Clerk's office. Upon receipt of this plate, your regular (special) issue license plate must be turned in or issued to another vehicle.

### Decal Expires Customer's Birth Month

\$10.00 of the initial and \$5.00 of the renewal registration fee goes to the Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs. For more information, please visit <http://veterans.ky.gov> . This plate is available for personalization with an additional \$25.00 fee annually. Personalization is limited to a maximum of 5 characters.

Relevant KRS [186.162](#)

# Military Women's Memorial "Tell Her Story"



The Military Women's Memorial (MWM) is the only major national memorial honoring all servicewomen – past, present and future. The MWM honors more than 3 million women who served and continue to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces since the American Revolution.

Women's military service should be no less recognized than men's but historically the focus of history and preservation has been on men.

## Why it's Important to Register?

EVERY STORY is important, EVERY STORY deserves to be told. Yet we have lost most of our WWI women veterans and our WWII women are fast coming to their final chapter. What history we have not recorded will be lost with them. We absolutely CANNOT let another generation go by without ensuring that our collective contributions are captured and remembered.

Please REGISTER HERE : [www.womensmemorial.org](http://www.womensmemorial.org)

There is no cost to register! You can register any woman you know who is in or has served in the military. Let's keep "HER-Story alive!"

## Useful VA Links

- **VA Housing Assistance Page** - Information about home loans, eligibility, interest rates reductions and other related topics: <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/>
- **National Center for PTSD** - Provides information and resources to veterans, care providers and organizations relating PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
- **Covid-19 Vaccine Updates** - Latest updates on Covid-19 guidance and vaccinations: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>
- **VA Life Insurance (VALife)** - <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>

- **Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E)** - job training, education, employment coaching, etc.: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>

## Upcoming Veterans Dates and Events

- Women's History Month (**March**)
- Navy Reserve Birthday (**March 3**)
- Seabee Birthday (**March 5**)
- Daylight Saving Time Begins (**March 10**)
- K9 Veterans Day (**March 13**)
- St. Patrick's Day (**March 17**)
- Vietnam Veterans Day (**March 29**)
- Easter Sunday (**March 31**)

## Resources for Veterans



### Flood Relief

Have you been affected by flooding in Eastern Kentucky? The Governor's Office has prepared a list of resources designed to help you make it through this challenging time.

Click here for more information:  
<https://governor.ky.gov/disaster-response/flood-resources>

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