



# The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Dept. of Veterans' Services  
February 2025

•Website: [www.nmdvs.org](http://www.nmdvs.org)

•Facebook: [NMDVSHHealthcare2015](https://www.facebook.com/NMDVSHHealthcare2015)

•Instagram: [newmexicoveterans](https://www.instagram.com/newmexicoveterans)

## Military and Veterans Day at The New Mexico Legislature February 19th at the State Capitol



"Enduring Legacy" is this year's theme for honoring veterans and active-duty service members at the State Capitol rotunda. The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) and the New Mexico National Guard (NMNG) will pay tribute to New Mexico's veterans and military community members for their service and sacrifices for our state and country.

This event offers a fantastic opportunity for veterans, active service members, their families, and the public to meet legislators and discuss veteran-related issues. From 8am to 12pm, the rotunda will host information tables staffed by

NMDVS, NMNG, VFW, DAV, the American Legion, veteran service organizations, and community partners. This is a great chance to learn about services or benefits that you or your family members may not be aware of, but are entitled to.

The ceremony to honor our veterans and service members will begin at noon in the rotunda. This year, in recognition of New Mexico's enduring legacy of service, we will honor Valdemar DeHerrera, who at 105 years old, is our oldest survivor of the Bataan liberation. Valdemar's story of courage as a prisoner of war is both inspirational and moving.

Scheduled speakers include NMDVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera and NMNG Assistant Adjutant General Nathaniel Carper. We look forward to seeing you on February 19th on Military and Veterans Day at the New Mexico Legislature.



(ABOVE PHOTOS: Valdemar DeHerrera from left to right: with Angelo Sakelares in Manchuria; attending an Honors event in 2008 and in Santa Fe at the end of WWII).

## DAV of New Mexico Stand Down at The Rock at Noonday

The Disabled American Veterans of New Mexico (DAV) hosted the 2025 Homeless Veteran Stand Down one-day event on January 17, at the Rock at Noonday homeless shelter in Albuquerque. The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS), Paws and Stripes, VA Health Care Authority, Women Veterans of New Mexico, and many other organizations joined to identify and offer assistance and services to our homeless veterans.



The Rock serves over 85,000 plates of food to people without housing each year while providing a safe place to shower, receive clothing, and other essential services. According to the Veterans Administration (VA), nationally since 2010 veteran homelessness is down by 55.6%, however homelessness in New Mexico continues to be a major problem and finding our veterans through outreach events is a critical mission for NMDVS. If you know of veterans facing homelessness in our state, please get in touch with our offices. Our trained staff of social workers and healthcare coordinators can help them find the resources to get help. Contact DVS by phone statewide at 1-866-433-8387 or via email at [nmdvs.info@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:nmdvs.info@dvs.nm.gov).



*ABOVE PHOTOS: (upper and lower left) DVS Social Worker and Healthcare Coordinator Theresa Castillo assists veterans in need. (upper right) DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera, shares a story of hope with DAV NM Jr. Vice Commander Bill Burch. (lower right) DAV of NM Commander Kevin Dassing, DAV of NM Chaplin, Allison Vazquez with DVS Cabinet Secretary, Jamison Herrera.*



# Silver City Veteran Service Officer Clarissa Sierra Recognized by Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales

On January 31, 2025, New Mexico Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales visited the Silver City office of the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS). During this visit, he presented Veteran Service Officer (VSO) Clarissa Sierra with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of her exemplary efforts to assist New Mexico veterans in securing state and federal benefits. Her prior service as a military police officer in the New Mexico Army National Guard from 2012 to 2018 is also commendable. Clarissa represents the dedication and commitment of individuals who enhance the quality of life in our state.



Clarissa's office is based in Silver City, serving Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, and Catron counties. The NMDVS operates seventeen field offices throughout the state, staffed by highly trained and committed VSOs. Lieutenant Governor Morales emphasized the critical nature of the services provided by these officers, sharing personal experiences of how they aided his own father in obtaining veteran benefits. Clarissa has been with NMDVS for two years and expresses pride in facilitating access to the benefits veterans deserve. While away from work she enjoys supporting her two daughters in various sports activities.

(From left to right: Rudy Martinez, New Mexico Veterans Advisory Council member; Raymond Bejaran, Trustee of Gutierrez-McBride VFW Post 12212, Grant County; NMDVS VSO Clarissa Sierra; Lt. Governor Howie Morales; Jacob Madrid, Junior Vice Commander, Gutierrez-McBride VFW Post 12212, Grant County.



Clarissa with Lt. Governor Howie Morales.



## New Mexico Advocacy Action Day at the Legislature

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) brought advocates together in the state capitol on February 12th to advocate for policy changes that aid in the prevention of suicide. In partnership with the New Mexico State Suicide Prevention Coalition, AFSP brings together community partners, legislators, and advocates to save lives and bring help and hope to those affected by suicide. The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) healthcare professionals and the Women Veterans Program were on-site with resources and information to assist veterans with crisis counseling, mental health, and many other state and federally sponsored programs. The Healthcare Division at NMDVS is dedicated to helping and advocating for our veterans and their families' healthcare-related needs.



NMDVS Health Care Director,  
Diane Mourning Brown



The Healthcare Division develops and coordinates outreach and veteran programs that promote transitional living, housing, suicide prevention, advocacy, and transportation related to healthcare access and other issues for New Mexico Veterans. You can call NMDVS at 1-866-433-8387 or visit our website [here](#).

## Remains of MIA Korean War Soldier from Los Lunas Identified.

On January 31, 2025, the remains of Army Pfc. Arthur A. Clifton, killed during the Korean War, were laid to rest near other family members also buried at San Antonio National Cemetery, San Antonio, Texas.

A native of Los Lunas, New Mexico, Clifton was a member of Headquarters Battery, 48th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 11, 1950, at age 17, after Chinese forces attacked his unit as they attempted to withdraw near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea.

On Aug. 19, 2024, Clifton was accounted for after analysis and identification by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, after his remains were exhumed in March 2021 from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services sends condolences to the family and recognizes Clifton's sacrifice to our state and country.



Army Pfc. Arthur A. Clifton







## Senior Day at the Legislature

On January 27th, 2025, seniors, caregivers, and advocates for aging services in New Mexico gathered at the capitol rotunda on January 27, 2025, to celebrate our senior community. The event saw strong attendance from various organizations dedicated to promoting positive changes for those aging in New Mexico. New Mexico Aging Services hosted the gathering, which plays an essential role in improving the lives of the state's aging population.

New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) staff were available to answer questions and provide information on state and federal programs that benefit senior veterans. According to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey, there are over 18.2 million veterans aged 65 or older in the United States. These veterans served in conflicts across the globe, including World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers benefits and services tailored to address the various health risks and financial challenges they may face.

New Mexico offers a variety of benefits for senior veterans including property tax exemptions, education assistance, and transportation services. NMDVS provides free services to help veterans, and their families find and apply for benefits.

For more information, contact NMDVS by phone at 1-866-433-8387 or via email at [nmdvs.info@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:nmdvs.info@dvs.nm.gov).



*ABOVE PHOTOS: (upper left) Full rotunda to start off Senior Day. (upper right, lower left) NMDVS Social Worker and Healthcare Coordinator Theresa Castillo engages senior veterans. (lower right) Seniors get some exercise in the rotunda before the introduction of guests.*

## American Indian Day at the Legislature

The Indian Affairs Department (IAD) hosted the annual American Indian Day at the State Capitol on February 7th, 2025. Tribal leaders, advocates, and performers celebrated “Tribal self-determination” on the day. During the event, Department of Veterans’ Services (NMDVS) Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera presented 100-year-old WWII and Korean War veteran Burton Platero with an award for his service to our state and nation.

Burton Platero was born August 8, 1924, in Canoncito, New Mexico, home to the To’hajiilee Chapter of the Navajo Nation. His family consisted of farmers and ranchers. He was active in community rodeos until grade 11, when he was drafted into the Navy at age 17.

Mr. Platero served in the U.S. Navy from November 1943 to December 1945 and in the Army Air Force/U.S. Air Force from October 1948 to August 1952. He primarily served on the USS Fremont attack transport ship during WWII. Mr. Platero participated in the landing at Saipan, Palau Islands, Leyte Gulf, and Iwo Jima, as well as significant battles in the Pacific Theater. After leaving the Navy, he joined the Army Air Forces. He took part in the Berlin Airdrop in June 1948-May 1949, delivering food and supplies to allied controlled areas of Berlin. During the Korean War, he served on cargo planes, flying food to people on the Korean coast. He left the Air Force with the rank of Staff Sergeant in 1952.

Returning home to New Mexico from the war, Platero worked for the Public Health Service and the Navajo Tribe community health department. He retired in 1990. Platero remains active, going for walks and fishing with his family. There are some things about his time in the military, especially during World War II, he prefers not to remember, according to his daughter, Minga. Mr. Platero talks to his grandchildren weekly, and his pride in their military service is palpable. Mr. Platero is a member of the To’hajiilee Chapter of the Navajo Nation, VFW post 6216, and The American Legion. Platero is surprised to have been here for so long and is proud of his military service.

Thank you to IAD, the Platero family, and everyone who attended this special event on American Indian Day at the State Capitol.



*ABOVE PHOTOS: (left) Michael Saiz of NMDVS answering veteran service questions. (right) Navajo President Dr. Buu Van Nygren, NMDVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera, Minga Platero, Honoree Burron Platero, and NMDVS Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley.*



## 80th Anniversary of the raising of the American Flag at Iwo Jima

On February 23, 1945, four days after the initial assault on the island of Iwo Jima, U.S. Marines took control of the high ground and planted an American flag atop Mt. Suribachi. The flag raising was a powerful symbol of victory, but it did not signal the end of the fight on Iwo Jima. It did however mark a turning point in the battle, motivating the Marines and corpsmen, flushing out an entrenched enemy force and inspiring hope in the hearts of many.



New Mexico veteran Thomas Begay was born in a traditional hogan in a remote area near Two Wells, New Mexico. Although his exact date of birth was not recorded, he celebrated his 100th birthday in November 2024. Begay joined the Marine Corps and attended Code Talker training assigned to the Signal Company for the 5th Marine Division. He was on the front lines at Iwo Jima after being sent to the 27th Marines as a replacement for another Code Talker killed in action.

Navajo Code Talker Thomas H. Begay from Two Wells, New Mexico, recalled what it was like to see the Stars and Stripes fly high over the island. "It was the greatest feeling I ever had," Begay said.

The island, 10 square miles in area, was a Japanese stronghold halfway between Saipan and Tokyo. The Iwo Jima assault started on February 19, 1945, with three Marine divisions and over 80,000 men. U.S. Marines took control of Mount Suribachi four days later and raised the American flag. Joe Rosenthal's iconic photo captured the flag raising and is the model for the Marine Corps War Memorial and the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

The battle, a testament to the ultimate sacrifice, lasted 36 days and claimed the lives of 5,931 U.S. Marines. 209 U.S. Navy corpsmen and surgeons assigned to the U.S. Marines also died, as well as Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen from other units. More than 110,000 Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen served, with more than 26,000 killed or wounded.



Begay was discharged from the Marines in 1946 but joined the Army a year later as a communications specialist and a paratrooper. With the Army, he worked with the 7th Infantry Division in Korea, including at the Chosin Reservoir in late 1950. After his service in Korea he left the military in 1953.

After leaving the military, Thomas Begay worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) on the Navajo reservation as an employment assistance officer, helping Navajos find employment and education opportunities. He has been active in the Navajo Code Talkers Association, public speaking and performing his songs in Navajo about his time in WWII.

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services recognizes the rich history of our veteran community and honors the legacy of their sacrifices for our state and country.



# Upcoming DVS Veterans' Property Tax Exemption Events

Both proposed Veterans' Property Tax Exemption Amendments 1 and 2 were passed during the November 2024 General Election and are now undergoing the legislative approval process for enactment.

NMDVS and the TAX REV department will collaborate closely with the County Assessor's offices to develop and implement rules for the upcoming 2025 tax exemption changes.

A revised NMDVS DVS-1 application will be introduced with a new disabled percentage rating certificate for implementation. As soon as the rules process is approved for implementation, information on when to apply for the new certificate will be announced.

## What will change for the 2025 Property Tax Exemption?

**Amendment 1** changes the New Mexico Constitution to extend the existing property tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans and their widows and widowers. This extension now includes veterans with less than 100% disability and their widows or widowers. The exemption amount is based on a veteran's federal service-connected disability rating, as determined by federal law.

**Amendment 2** changes the New Mexico Constitution to increase the Veterans' property tax exemption for honorably discharged members of the armed forces and their widows or widowers from **\$4,000 to \$10,000**. The amount will then be adjusted for inflation after 2025.

DVS will keep you updated on the process and has scheduled veteran property tax exemption events throughout the state to explain the changes for the 2025 tax year. DVS will also have Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) on-site to assist veterans and their eligible dependents with filing VA claims and obtaining federal and state benefits.

Our VSOs also help connect veterans to vital community resources, such as transitional housing and medical and behavioral health care. Information and assistance on federal and state benefits, local veterans' programs, and referral services are available at any of our field office locations.

Los Alamos	3/8	VFW Post 8874, 1793 Deacon St. Los Alamos, NM 87544	9am-2pm
Raton	3/10	Office of Colfax County Assessor, 230 N St. Raton, NM 87740	9am-2pm
Belen	3/18	Valencia County Senior Citizen Center, 715 S Main St. Belen, NM 87002	9am-2pm
Santa Rosa	3/27	Guadalupe County Veterans, Center 720 Lake Dr. Santa Rosa, NM 88435	9am-2pm
Clovis	3/28	American Legion Dean Lucas Post 25, 2400 W. 7th St. Clovis, NM 8810	9am-2pm
Roswell	3/29	Veterans Symposium Hobson Hall, SE NM Fairgrounds, Roswell, NM	9am-2pm
Aztec	4/2	Office of San Juan Country Assessor, 100 S. Oliver Dr. Aztec, NM 87410	9am-3pm
Moriarty	4/17	Soil & Water Conservation Dist. Facility, 2506 NM-333 Moriarty, NM 87035	9am-2pm
Las Cruces	4/24	Dona Ana County Assessors, 845 N Motel Dr. Las Cruces, NM 88007	TBD

**If you have any further questions on the new veterans' property tax amendments, please call our offices at: 505-827-6300 or 505-383-2400 or you can visit [nmdvs.org](http://nmdvs.org)**

# LOS ALAMOS COUNTY ASSESSORS VETERANS PROPERTY TAX EVENT

**Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup> (11:00 am – 2:00 pm)**

**Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8874  
1793 Deacon Street Los Alamos, NM 87544**



**NM Dept of Veterans' Services** and **Los Alamos County Assessor** representatives will be on site to assist eligible veterans and unmarried widows of veterans with applying for their qualified property tax waiver or exemption.

### **Veterans Property Tax Exemption**

A \$4,000 reduction of the taxable value of a veterans' New Mexico property assessment

### **Veterans Property Tax Waiver**

For veterans with a service-connected VA-rating of 100% Permanent & Total  
Waives the property tax payment of a veteran's primary residence

**The following documents will be required to verify Property Tax certificate eligibility:**

1. A copy of your DD-214, NA 13038, NOAA form 56-16, or PHS form 1867
2. If applicable, VA Award letter verifying Permanent & Total service-connected disability
3. Proof of New Mexico Residency – Includes one of the following documents:

Valid NM Driver's license / Current voters registration card / Most recent NM income tax return

For more information:

Los Alamos County Assessor's Office (505) 662-8030 or  
Jeff George jeff.george@dvs.nm.gov (505) 699-4087



# COLFAX COUNTY ASSESSORS VETERANS PROPERTY TAX EVENT

Monday March 10<sup>th</sup> (9:00 am – 2:00 pm)

Office of the Colfax County Assessor  
230 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Raton, NM 87740



NM Dept of Veterans' Services and Colfax County Assessor representatives will be on site to assist eligible veterans and unmarried widows of veterans with applying for their qualified property tax waiver or exemption.

### **Veterans Property Tax *Exemption***

A \$4,000 reduction of the taxable value of a veterans' New Mexico property assessment

### **Veterans Property Tax *Waiver***

For veterans with a service-connected VA-rating of 100% Permanent & Total  
Waives the property tax payment of a veteran's primary residence

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1. A copy of your DD-214, NA 13038, NOAA form 56-16, or PHS form 1867
2. If applicable, VA Award letter verifying Permanent & Total service-connected disability
3. Proof of New Mexico Residency – Includes one of the following documents:

Valid NM Driver's license / Current voters registration card / Most recent NM income tax return

For more information: Kristi Graham [kgraham@co.colfax.nm.us](mailto:kgraham@co.colfax.nm.us) (575) 445-2314 or  
Jeff George [jeff.george@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:jeff.george@dvs.nm.gov) (505) 699-4087

# New Mexico Veteran’s Business Outreach Center

## “Boots to Business” Classes

Join us at the New Mexico Veteran’s Business Outreach Center (VBOC) for our exciting “Boots to Business” classes! We're dedicated to empowering veterans, transitioning service members, National Guard and Reserve members, as well as spouses who are eager to start or grow their businesses.



These engaging sessions are held from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, with some on-base classes from 8:00am to 4:30pm. Don’t forget, on-base privileges are required for those special sessions marked with an asterisk (\*). We can't wait to support you on your entrepreneurial journey!

City	Dates	Venue/Address
*Kirtland AFB	February 18-19	<a href="https://sba.my.site.com/s/b2b-course-information">https://sba.my.site.com/s/b2b-course-information</a>
NMSU-Grants Campus	February 20-21	1500 3rd St. Martinez Hall Rm. 007 Grants, NM 87020
UNM Gallup	February 26-27	705 Gurley Ave. Room SSTC 200 Gallup, NM 87031
*Cannon AFB	March 6-7	CAFB Airman & Family & Readiness Center

## The Boots to Business Program

These free two-day introduction to entrepreneurship courses will present information about the key elements of small business ownership and expansion, techniques for evaluating the feasibility of business concepts, and the steps needed to develop an all-important business plan—a “must” for anyone looking to start or expand a business.

The classes will also introduce a broad spectrum of entrepreneurial business concepts, such as accessing resources available for obtaining start-up or expansion capital, technical assistance, and pursuing federal contracting opportunities. To register for these classes, please go to the blue registration links found with each listing. For additional information about the Boots to Business program, or the New Mexico VBOC, contact VBOC Director [johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov) or call (505) 469-8501.

*Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.*

## The New Mexico Veteran’s Business Outreach Center (VBOC)

The VBOC is funded by a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) grant managed by DVS to help veterans, transitioning active service members, National Guard & Reserve members, and their spouses who are interested in starting or growing a small business. It can help with everything from business planning, start-up and expansion funding, marketing, landing federal contracts, and anything else a small business needs to launch and grow.

DVS was the first state agency in the nation funded by the SBA to offer this “one-stop-shop” when the SBA launched this grant program in 2010.

The VBOC is located in the DVS Albuquerque office at 4801 Indian School Road NE/Building 2. Drop-in visits for business counseling are welcome—but scheduling an appointment is strongly recommended.



## Upcoming DVS Veterans' Benefits Outreach Visits

DVS is scheduled to make the following January and February outreach visits at the locations listed below. Veterans and/or their eligible dependents are encouraged to stop by to file for--or ask information about--VA disability ratings, VA medical or mental health care, retiree pensions, military burials, and many other VA benefits.

Staff can also help with applying for state veterans' benefits such as fishing and hunting licenses, veterans' license plates, new property tax exemptions and many more state veterans' benefits.

Please bring a copy of your DD Form 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, which are necessary for filing all veterans' benefits claims. DVS can help assist veterans file for lost or misplaced DD 214s.

Cannon AFB	2/25, 3/11	Military & Family Readiness Center	2:30-5:30pm
Mora	3/5	VFW Post 1131/ 2825 NM Hwy 518 (mile marker 28.5)	1pm-5pm
Capitan	4/2, 6/4, 8/6	Capitan Library/101 E 2nd St.	10am-2pm
Holloman AFB	2/19	Military Family Readiness Center	8am-10am
Raton	2/19	Raton CBOC/1493 Whittier St.	10am-2pm
Ruidoso	5/7, 7/9	Ruidoso Community Ctr/501 Sudderth Dr.	10am-3pm
Santa Rosa	3/27	Guadalupe County Veterans' Ctr/720 Lake Dr.	10am-2pm
Deming	3/12	Old VFW Bldg. 4045 Overhill Dr. NW	10am-1pm
Deming	2/26	Luna County Senior Center/800 S Granite St.	10am-12:30pm
Socorro/Belen	1st & 3rd Tue.	Forget Me Not Veteran Ctr/705 N. California	9am-3pm

### The following are weekly outreach visits:

Santa Fe	Mon.-Fri.	Santa Fe Vet Center/2209 Brothers Rd.	9am-3pm
Truth or Consequences	Wed.	State Veterans Home/992 S. Broadway	9am-4pm

As a reminder, veterans and their eligible dependents can always contact any of the 17 DVS field offices statewide listed on the last two pages of this newsletter. Each office is staffed by nationally certified veterans' service officers (VSO), who can also offer assistance by phone or email. **If you know of or are hosting a veterans' or community event that would benefit from having a Veterans' Service Officer on site to help answer questions on benefits available please contact DVS Field Services Director Robin Wilson at [Robin.Wilson@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:Robin.Wilson@dvs.nm.gov)**

## Department of Veterans Services Employee Spotlight



The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (NMDVS) is pleased to welcome Chris Brownlee as our new Procurement and Contracts Specialist. Chris joins us from the Department of Public Safety, where he worked in purchasing. Originally from Jordan, Chris grew up throughout the Middle East and in various states across the U.S. He comes from a long line of military service, with family members who have served in every conflict since the French and Indian Wars.



Chris' grandfather, a World War II Marine, famously advised his father on his deathbed, saying, "Son, I don't care what you do, I'll be proud; just don't be a Marine." Following this advice, his father joined the Army. Chris himself was commissioned as an Army Engineer Officer, serving with the Second Engineer (Combat) Battalion at White Sands Missile Range and deploying with the 573rd Clearance Company. After leaving the Army in 2015, Chris found fulfillment in service, working for various New Mexico agencies and even teaching history.

Outside of his role supporting NMDVS in acquiring goods and services for our veteran community, he enjoys cooking, skiing, and backpacking with his girlfriend and their four dogs: Boogy, Frankie, Juniper, and Paloma.

Chris believes that the mission of NMDVS aligns with his values of supporting New Mexico veterans and helping them access the benefits they deserve. We are proud to have him as part of our NMDVS team.

**Chris Brownlee**

*Procurement & Contracts*

## Terrence Rickard Retires from NMDVS

Terrence Rickard was hired by NMDVS on November 27, 2017, known by fellow employees as "Terry". Terry is credited with implementing the IT foundation and infrastructure for NMDVS. As the agency was transferred from the Veterans Commission to a state agency, this small agency of about 40 employees has since doubled. Whether troubleshooting internet connectivity, preparing equipment for new hires, or strategizing on future IT demands, Terry was passionate about his job. In his farewell speech, Terry noted that when he returned to work at the State, he had just one agency in mind. As a veteran, he wanted to work with and support veterans. For the past seven-plus years, Terry has been doing just that. Terry started as an ABF (Aviation Fuels Specialist) and became a US Navy Diver in the US Navy, having served from 1977 to 1982. While in the Navy, Terry served on the USS Constellation CV-64, Kitty Hawk (CV-63), Enterprise (CVN-65), and VS-29 Antisubmarine Squadron 29 (Dragonfires) and was sent through BUDS (Basic Underwater Demolitions) and Seal Training at the North Island Amphibious Base. Everyone at NMDVS wishes him the best in his new adventures.



*(NMDVS Deputy Secretary Eric James and Terry Rickard)*





## News from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

### Veterans Legacy Memorial Expanded

Find your Veteran  
and add a tribute



VETERANS LEGACY  
MEMORIAL



The U.S. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expanded the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM)- the nation's first digital platform dedicated to the memory of Veterans and service members. Now veterans can tell their own story before they pass away. The new "Your Story, Your Legacy" feature will allow Veterans who have been approved for VA's pre-need eligibility determination for burial in a VA national cemetery to log in to a secure website where they can privately submit images, autobiographies, military and life milestones, and historical documents.

VLM offers family, friends, and now Veterans a way to chronicle the life of a Veteran by uploading written tributes, photos, biographies, documents, and other information. It is the nation's largest online memorial space dedicated to Veterans, with nearly 10 million interactive VLM pages already on the website for those interred in VA national cemeteries, Department of Defense-managed cemeteries, VA grant-funded state/tribal cemeteries, National Park Service cemeteries, and private cemeteries around the world.

VA will keep the content secure until the Veteran passes away and VA approves a request for a burial or memorial benefit. Following approval, submitted content will become public and appear on their VLM page on the public-facing website.

Veterans approved for pre-need eligibility will receive an email directing them to the "Your Story, Your Legacy" landing page. Here is where to apply [online](#).

For information about VA burial benefits, visit [VA burial benefits and memorial products](#), or call toll free at 800-827-1000. To plan for you and your family, visit NCA's [pre-need eligibility](#) website.

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services State Benefits Division also currently operates three state veteran cemeteries, assisting families with ensuring veterans and eligible dependents have an honorable final resting place. For more information on our cemeteries, and services please [click here](#).

## Benefits and Survivors Handbook

Download the Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors handbook online or pick up a printed copy at your local medical center, regional office or Vet Center for free.

Have you applied for VA care, benefits and services? Unsure what else you may be eligible for? Don't miss out on what you've earned—check out this handy reference guide to learn more.

The handbook contains a comprehensive listing of VA programs, including phone numbers and websites for easy reference. The annual Federal Benefits Guide hosts a wealth of information on most VA benefits and services, including: compensation, life insurance, pension and education benefits, and more. The handbook will help Veterans, service members and their families understand the full scope of VA resources available to them to help them make the most of life after service.

The VA Federal Benefits Guide is available in both print and digital formats. Veterans and family members can access the booklet by clicking here: [VA's website](#), providing instant and convenient access to the wealth of information it contains.

You can also call VA at 800-827-1000 from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday to speak with a representative.

**Federal Benefits**  
for Veterans, Dependents,  
Survivors, and Caregivers  
2025 Edition

**VA Health Connect**

**120 million**  
calls handled

- Scheduling and Administration
- Clinical Triage
- Virtual Clinic Visits
- Pharmacy Support
- Tele-Emergency Care

## Veterans Can Speak With Someone Anywhere at Any Time

VA Health Connect is a simple way for Veterans to connect with a real person right now for: Help with scheduling appointments, Pharmacy needs, Medical evaluations and guidance.

A virtual meeting with a medical provider, including tele-emergency care if appropriate.

VA Health Connect has handled more than 120 million calls with more than 10 million unique calls from Veterans and their families and caregivers. Veterans can call from anywhere at any time to get the care they need when they need it. To find your local VA medical center number, check the [Find VA Locations](#) webpage.

VA Health Connect and tele-emergency care do not replace emergency room care. Veterans should call 911 or go to the emergency room if they think they are experiencing a life-threatening emergency.

If a Veteran is in crisis or if a person is concerned about a Veteran in crisis, they should contact the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) to receive 24/7 confidential support. Veterans don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to contact the crisis line. To reach responders, dial 988 then press 1; [chat online](#), or text 838255.



# Veterans' Community Bulletin Board

The following pages feature event and informational flyers provided to DVS by veterans and community service agencies. These flyers are published for the convenience of New Mexico's veteran community. Inclusion in The Guardian does not constitute an endorsement by DVS of the organization, content, products, or services contained therein.

DVS invites government agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers for publication in The Guardian announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will run these flyers as a public service courtesy to the veteran community.

- Flyers must have the name of a point-of-contact from the organization.
- DVS is not responsible for the accuracy of the content, products, or services in these flyers.
- Views expressed in these flyers are the independent views of the authors/owners of the third-party entity that created the flyer—and does not necessarily reflect the views of DVS.
- To the maximum extent permitted by law, DVS expressly denies liability for any and all losses suffered by any persons or organizations who, in their independent discretion and reliance, either directly or indirectly rely on content, products, services or information offered by these independent third-party organizations.
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**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans AffairsVeterans Health Administration  
New Mexico VA Health Care System**ONE  
ALBUQUE  
RQUE**

**The New Mexico VA in Partnership  
with RoadRunner Food Bank and  
ONE ALBUQUERQUE**

*Hosts:*

# Free Food Distribution

**Every 4th Thursday of the Month**

**Thursday, February 27, 2025**

**9 a.m.- 11 a.m or** until all food supply is passed out.

**Located:**

**Veteran's Memorial Park**

**1100 Louisiana Blvd SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108**



**JOIN US**



# **STAND DOWN**

## **FOR VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES**



**Saturday, Feb. 22**  
12-4 PM



**Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial Park**  
Window Rock, AZ 86515



**(928) 910-4225**  
Call to pre-register  
First 200 receive a food box



**DINÉ  
NAAZBAA  
PARTNERSHIP**



# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DAY 2025

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF RESILIENCY, PREVENTION & HEALING TOGETHER

## February 24 - 26, 2025

### February 24, 2025

BHPC BH Training day @ the Drury Plaza Hotel in SF

### Training Registration:

<https://centerofinnovationnm.org/nm-behavioral-health-day-registration/>

### February 25, 2025

Behavioral Health Star Award Ceremony @ the Drury Plaza Hotel in SF from 1:30 – 4:00 pm

### February 26, 2025

Behavioral Health Day at the Legislature at the State Capitol Rotunda from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

### Hotel Reservation:

<https://www.druryhotels.com/bookandstay/newreservation/?groupno=10133915>

**Hotel info: Drury Plaza Hotel in Santa Fe, 828 Paseo de Peralta**

Please make your reservations by Wednesday, January 22, 2025 to receive the group rate. Reservations made after this date will be subject to prevailing rates and availability. Reservations may also be made by calling 1-800-325-0720 and referring to the group number 10133915.





# DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY UNIT #29

**DAV** Auxiliary  
*Making a Difference*

DOOR  
PRIZES

KIDS  
JUMPERS

==== ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ =====

## *1st Annual Veterans & Family Resource Fair*

==== ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ =====



**WHEN: FRIDAY APRIL 11TH**  
**TIME: 9AM - 3PM**

**WHERE: VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK**  
**1100 LOUISIANA BLVD SE ALB NM 87108**

Vendor Tables  
\$40

**DAV National Service Officers**  
**Veterans Organizations**



**Resource Tables With Lots Of Information**

*For more information or to reserve a table please call 505-977-4423*  
**NMDAVA29@gmail.com**



**APRIL 5 2025**     **Disabled Veterans - Veterans - Active Duty**  
**Fly Fishing 101 Class - Free!**  
**Estancia, NM - Arthur Park Lake**



**Fly Fishing 101 Beginners Class**  
**For Disabled Veterans - Veterans - Active Duty**  
**April 5, 2025 - Estancia, NM - It's free!**

*Learn how to fly fish!*  
*Bring a military buddy!*  
*Lunch provided! - Door prizes!*

**Space is limited - Sign-up with the link below**  
**Or scan QR code**

[tu.myeventscenter.com/event/Flyfish101april5-104799](http://tu.myeventscenter.com/event/Flyfish101april5-104799)



POC: Doc Thompson, Trout Warriors, Director. Email: [doct@flyfishnewmexico.com](mailto:doct@flyfishnewmexico.com)



# Veterans Legal Clinic

**Tuesday, March 11**

**8:30–11 a.m.**

*In-Person Clinic*

Veterans' Memorial Park  
1100 Louisiana Blvd SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87108

- Family Law  
(divorce, custody/visitation, child support)
- Consumer Rights
- Bankruptcy
- Landlord-Tenant
- Foreclosure
- Employment
- Tax
- Wills/Probate \*attorneys at this clinic cannot draft nor revise wills.
- General Civil

**Attendance is on a walk-in basis.**

Help is contingent on Volunteer Attorneys. We attempt to get volunteers with experience and expertise in each of the above areas of law but cannot guarantee all above areas will be represented at the Clinic. If you have any further questions, please contact the Veterans Justice Outreach Program at 505-206-9086. *Additional service providers will be in attendance to provide resources to veterans.*



State Bar of New Mexico  
Young Lawyers  
Division



# ARE YOU A VETERAN IN SEARCH OF GUIDANCE?

Enjoy a complimentary week filled with mindful education, body rejuvenation, and uplifting camaraderie alongside fellow veterans and their partners in the beautiful mountains of New Mexico. Discover valuable therapeutic and holistic tools while embracing Post Traumatic Growth.

## NATIONAL VETERANS WELLNESS & HEALING CENTER 2025 RETREAT SCHEDULE

**NEW DATE ADDED!!**

**April 6-13**

**April 27- May 4**

**June 1-8**

**September 7-14**

**October 19-26**

Retreats offer complimentary lodging, meals, and a variety of activities such as massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga, horseback riding, and much more! Please note that travel expenses are not included.

### Eligibility Criteria for Attendance:

1. Veterans diagnosed with PTS
2. A support partner must accompany you
3. Participants must have been free from drug or alcohol abuse for at least 12 months

Note: New Mexico veterans will receive priority. Veterans from other states will be accepted as funding permits.

**505-501-8337**

[retreats@vethealingcenter.org](mailto:retreats@vethealingcenter.org)

**Apply Today!**



**Donate Today!**







## BBB® Military & Veterans Initiative

Empowering our military and veteran community to thrive in the marketplace by providing consumer education that supports:

- 1 **Choosing better businesses,**
- 2 **Avoiding losing money** to fraud and scams,
- 3 **Making smart financial decisions** about large purchases, searching for employment, planning for retirement, and much more.

For more information or to request a free presentation, contact us today!

BBB Serving New Mexico

Contact Us

7007 Jefferson Street NE, Suite A

Albuquerque, NM 87109

Call 505 346-0110



Made possible by our partners at:

**zelle**





## NMDVS Field Offices in New Mexico

NMDVS has field offices throughout the state that are staffed with nationally accredited veterans service officers (VSOs) dedicated to helping veterans with filing VA claims, applying for state veterans benefits, or with anything else a veteran or their family needs.

Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, (excluding holidays). Though this service is free, appointments are required and can be made by contacting the VSOs below. **Please note: VSOs can also provide help by phone or email for any veteran or eligible dependent anywhere in New Mexico.**

### Alamogordo/Southeast NM

**David Henley/Tarrell Newell**

411 10th Street #107  
(575) 937-5620/(575) 546-8367  
[david.henley@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:david.henley@dvs.nm.gov)  
[tarrell.newell@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:tarrell.newell@dvs.nm.gov)

### Albuquerque (Downtown)

**Corey Riedel**

Dennis Chavez Federal Bldg.  
500 Gold Ave. SW/3rd floor  
(505) 479-0672  
[corey.riedel@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:corey.riedel@dvs.nm.gov)

### Carlsbad/Southeast NM

**Covered by Hobbs and Roswell**

101 N. Halagueno  
(575) 988-5900  
[fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov)  
[Danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:Danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov)

### Farmington/Northwest NM

**Ambrose Oliver**

San Quan College Vet Center 4601  
College Blvd./Room 1715-B  
(505) 916-4835  
[Ambrose.oliver@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:Ambrose.oliver@dvs.nm.gov)

### Hobbs/Southeast NM

**Fred Solis-Littlejohn**

2120 North Alto St.  
(575)-241-0714  
[Fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:Fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov)

### Albuquerque Metro Area

**May Chavez** (*ABQ metro supervisor*)

Pinetree Corporate Center/Bldg. 2  
4801 Indian School Rd. NE/2nd floor  
(505) 527-2302  
[helen.chavez@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:helen.chavez@dvs.nm.gov)

### Albuquerque (VA Hospital)

**DVS staff (9am-4pm)**

Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Ctr.  
1501 San Pedro Dr. SE  
(no appointment needed)  
(505) 383-2400

### Clovis/Southeast NM

**Matt Barela** (*SE region supervisor*)

904 W. Sixth St.  
(575) 825-9602  
[matthew.barela@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:matthew.barela@dvs.nm.gov)

### Gallup/Northwest NM

**John Livingston** (*NW supervisor*)

908 E. Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A  
(505) 389-8731  
[john.livingston@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:john.livingston@dvs.nm.gov)

### Las Cruces/Southwest NM

**Miguel Martinez** (*supervisor*)

2024 E. Griggs Ave.  
(575) 644-6869  
[miguel.martinez@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:miguel.martinez@dvs.nm.gov)

(continued on next page)

### Albuquerque (Bernalillo/Moriarty)

**Melissa Sena**

Pinetree Corporate Center/Bldg. 2  
4801 Indian School Rd. NE/2nd floor  
(505) 274-0939  
[melissa.sena@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:melissa.sena@dvs.nm.gov)

### Belen/ABQ Metro & Central NM

**Rob Miller** (*Albuquerque Supervisor*)

Belen Business Center  
719 South Main St.  
(505) 537-9339  
[rob.miller@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:rob.miller@dvs.nm.gov)

### Clovis/Southeast NM

**Ben Padilla**

904 W. Sixth St.  
(505) 537-1445  
[ben.padilla@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:ben.padilla@dvs.nm.gov)

### Grants/Northwest NM

**April Ball**

551 Washington Ave.  
(505) 521-8132  
[april.ball@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:april.ball@dvs.nm.gov)

### Las Cruces/Southwest NM

**Vincent Tellez**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.  
(505) 361-5298  
[vincent.tellez@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:vincent.tellez@dvs.nm.gov)



**Las Cruces/Southwest NM****Clint Anderson**

2024 E. Griggs Ave.  
(505) 261-8782

[Clint.anderson@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:Clint.anderson@dvs.nm.gov)

**Rio Rancho/Northeast NM****Dustin Newsom**

Sandoval County Admin. Bldg.  
1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D/room 2041  
(505) 221-7190

[dustin.newsom@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:dustin.newsom@dvs.nm.gov)

**Silver City/Southwest NM****Clarissa Sierra**

Western New Mexico University  
1000 West College Ave.  
Juan Chacon Bldg./Rm. 138A

(575) 313-5627

[clarissa.sierra@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:clarissa.sierra@dvs.nm.gov)

**Woman Veterans Program****Amberly Viner** *(Program Manager)*

Pinetree Corporate Center/Bldg. 2  
4801 Indian School Rd. NE/2nd floor  
(505) 372-9106

[Amberly.viner@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:Amberly.viner@dvs.nm.gov)

*NMDVS women veterans program is committed to making sure women veterans have equitable access to programs and services.*

**Las Vegas, NM/Northeast NM****Arturo Marlow** *(supervisor)*

917 Douglas Ave.  
(505) 331-8838

[arturo.marlow@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:arturo.marlow@dvs.nm.gov)

**Roswell/Southeast NM****Danielle Thompson**

1600 SE Main Street /Suite A  
(575) 416-2284

[danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov)

**Taos/Northeast NM****Leticia “Lety” Cano**

Health and Human Services Bldg. 145  
Roy Rd.

(505)-709-5263

[leticia.cano@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:leticia.cano@dvs.nm.gov)

**Tribal Liaison****Beverly Charley**

San Juan College Veterans Center  
4601 College Blvd./Room 1715-B  
(575) 241-3322

[beverly.charley@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:beverly.charley@dvs.nm.gov)

*NMDVS tribal liaison focuses on educational outreach and claims-filing.*

**Las Vegas/Northeast NM****Tracy Knox**

917 Douglas Ave.  
(505) 520-5079

[tracy.knox@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:tracy.knox@dvs.nm.gov)

**Santa Fe/Northeast NM****Phillip Hernandez**

Bataan Memorial Bldg.  
407 Galisteo St./1st Floor, Rm 134  
(505) 218-3125

[phillip.hernandez@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:phillip.hernandez@dvs.nm.gov)

**State Veterans Home/T or C NM****VSO Staff/Every Thursday**

922 South Broadway St.  
Truth or Consequences, NM

**NM Veterans Business Outreach Center (ABQ)****Johnny Martinez** *(Director)*

Pinetree Corporate Center/Bldg. 2  
4801 Indian School Rd. NE/2nd floor  
(505) 372-9106

[johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov)

*VBOC provides assistance for veterans and spouses who are looking to open a small business, expanding an existing operation, or securing federal contracts.*