

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Secretary
 Mr. John Kubinec, Member
 Mr. Steve Mendez, Member
 Mr. Tim Paslawski, Member
 Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
 Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors: Mr. Mark Bannister, Executive Dir., Health, Memorials, Finance & Development, GDVS
Present Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
 Mr. Tony Dobbins, State Adjutant, VFW
 Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer
 Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair, Veterans Service Foundation Board
 Mr. Don Layne, VECTR Chief Operating Officer
 Mr. Jimiyu Evans, Co-CEO, Project Community Connections, Inc.
 Ms. Shea Vela, VA Community Engagement & Partnerships Coordinator
 Mr. Vince Pritchett, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
 Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
 Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
 Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
 Mr. Edwin Berry, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS
 Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
 Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS
 Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVH, Milledgeville, GA
 Mr. Mark Demers, Grant Program Implementation Manager, GDVS
 Mr. Steven Fay, Assistant Director, Training & Professional Development, GDVS
 Ms. Debbie Gregory, Administrative Specialist, GDVS
 Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Thursday, December 15, 2022, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Kopsie called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Mr. Mendez gave the invocation. Mr. Kopsie led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the December Agenda. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the October minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. There were no objections. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted for the Board meeting:

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW

- The Department Service Officer attended the Annual Veterans Day Proclamation Signing Ceremony held at the GA State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334. The ceremony was held on November 09, 2022, at 1PM.
- The Department Service Officer and the VFW GA Commander and Staff attended an Atlanta Regional Office (RO) mission briefing hosted by the Atlanta Regional Office Director Tony Milons and his Staff. The briefing was held on November 10, 2022, at 10AM at the Atlanta Regional Office, 1700 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA 30033. The purpose of the briefing was to brief the VFW GA Commander and Staff on the mission of the Atlanta Regional Office.
- The Department Service Officer and the VFW GA Commander and Staff attended a Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) mission briefing hosted by Commissioner Patricia Ross and her Staff. The briefing was held on November 10, 2022, at 1PM at the Central Office, Floyd Veterans Memorial Building, Suite E-970, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE, Atlanta, GA 30333. The purpose of the briefing was to brief the VFW GA Commander and Staff on the mission of the GDVS.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Veterans Day "Women Only" Luncheon hosted by the T.M. Lynch Prayer Outreach Ministries Inc, Georgia Vet-Feet Inc, and the South Atlantic Center for Veterans Education and Training (SACVET) with guest speaker Ms. Ruthie Bolton, WNBA/Hall of Famer, 2x Olympic Gold Medalist and US Army Veteran. The luncheon was held on November 11, 2022, at 11AM – 3PM at the New Black Wall Street Mall, 8109 Mall Parkway, Lithonia, GA 30038. The purpose of the luncheon was to recognize and celebrate Women Veterans.
- The Department Service Officer participated in a Military Family Planning Workshop hosted by American Legion Post 516. The workshop was held on November 12, 2022, at 9AM – 1PM at 122 Legion Road, McDonough, GA 30253. The purpose of the workshop was to provide veterans and their family members information on healthcare, insurance, and preparing for life after death. I presented information on "Preparing Your Legacy."
- The GDVS Appeals Officer participated in a Veteran's Women Day program held at Saint Philip AME Church at 240 Candler Road SE, Atlanta, GA 30317. The program was held on November 13, 2022, at 9:30AM – 11AM. The purpose of the program was to recognize and celebrate Women Veterans. The GDVS presented 10 Women Veterans with a GDVS certificate of appreciation and a GDVS Women coin.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- The Department Service Officer attended a Zoom meeting hosted by the Atlanta VA Health Care System, Director and Staff with the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Health, Dr. Sheree Elnahal and VA Southeast Network Director Dr. David Walker. The meeting was held on November 18, 2022, at 2:45PM. The purpose of the meeting was to update the regional Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) and their State Partners on the hiring initiatives to hire employees to serve the Veterans of the Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina areas.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/CMA with the Atlanta Regional Officer Director and his Staff meeting. The meeting was hosted by Brian Morgan, Change Management Analyst (CMA) on November 29, 2022, at 1:30PM. The purpose for the meeting was to provide up-to-date information regarding the PACT Act and about the upcoming PACT Act Week.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/CMA meeting hosted by Brian Morgan, Change Management Analyst (CMA) on December 08, 2022, at 10AM. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the VSO's issues and concerns.

Mr. Tony Dobbins, State Adjutant, VFW

1. The department is currently conducting statewide judging of our Patriot's Pen (Middle School) and Voice of Democracy (High School) essay competitions as well as our Citizenship Teacher of the Year entries. The middle school national winner receives a \$5,000 scholarship and the high school winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship. A high school, middle school and elementary school teacher winner will be recognized at the state level.
2. Posts are gathering nominations for recognizing outstanding public safety officers (firefighters, law enforcement, and EMT). Nominations close on Jan 1, 2023. Winners in each category will be recognized at the state level.
3. Students, teachers, and public safety winners will be recognized at the awards dinner on Saturday evening as part of the VFW Mid-Winter Conference on February 17-19, 2023, in Macon.
4. VFW Georgia is conducting a statewide veterans Healthcare survey which ends on December 10th. The survey is seeking veterans needs and issues on VA healthcare here in Georgia. The VFW Washington Office will compile the results of the survey. The VFW Georgia delegation going to Washington, DC in March will share the results with our Congressional legislators.
5. VFW Georgia will be a participant in Commissioner Ross' GDVS "Unite Us" initiative.
6. VFW Georgia plans on having discussions with Governor Kemp's staff about declaring 2023 "The Year of the Veteran" in Georgia.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and VETLANTA

Georgia Military Women remains continually active on-line and in-person. GMW was well represented at veteran events throughout Georgia for Veterans Day. Repeatedly the women involved in GMA report that community and resources are their reasons for being a member. From a member: "Just in time resources when there's an urgent need, genuine care and concern between veterans, and the numerous get togethers across the state. These are my top 3. This Facebook page is probably one of the best veteran sites that I belong to."

Upcoming events for December include GMW holiday parties at various locations, service projects, Christmas card writing parties and packages being sent to troops overseas.

Update on VETLANTA. The Q4 VETLANTA Summit will be on December 7th at the Atlanta History Center. VETLANTA has also expanded in-person offerings in the Atlanta area. These include opportunities to join together for BATL Business Builders, BATL Brews, SHOP-Talk, VETLANTA Views, and continued podcasts VET-Talks. Look for more details at www.vetlanta.org.

Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 47 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries this month.
- Mr. Will Simmons, Commander, Ms. Pat Morgan, President ALA, Mr. George Gray, Commander SAL, Mr. Randy Goodman, A/NEC, Department Service Officer, Assistant Service Officer, visited the Atlanta VA Medical Center and Georgia War Home (Milledgeville) on November 1, 2022. War home provided a presentation concerning the operations, plans and development and a tour.
- Mr. Will Simmons, Commander, Ms. Pat Morgan, President ALA, Mr. George Gray, Commander SAL, Mr. Randy Goodman, A/NEC, Department Service Officer, Assistant Service Officer, and leadership teams from several local posts, visited Dublin VA Hospital. Received a brief presentation concerning the operations and plans for the hospital.
- Assistant Service Officer (Tonjala Moton-Williams) attended post 310 stand up meeting on November 15, 2022 and assisted 15 veterans with benefits related questions.
- Post service officer training was held at Post 90 on December 2, 2022. Department Service Officer (Raven Holstick) provided informational handouts concerning the PACT Act and post service officer guide.
- Upcoming event: Montgomery VA Medical Center January 25 @ 1:00 (Montgomery AL)

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Upcoming event: Tuskegee VA Medical Center November 26 @ 9:00 (Tuskegee AL)

Commissioner Patricia Ross

On Friday, October 21, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the GWVH RFP Discussion meeting, a meeting regarding the SSG Fox grant, a meeting with the Miner Agency, and a Fox Grant external evaluation meeting.

On Sunday, October 23, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended Dobbins Family Day, along with Shelly-Ann Simpson and Veda Brooks. This event was a day-long outreach to members from the Army National Guard, Air Force Reserves, Navy, Marines, and their families. Several hundred people visited the GDVS table.

On Monday, October 24, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She also attended the Electronic Health Records Management Virtual Town Hall for the National Association for State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) and VSOs as well as the October SWDB Meeting. She then took part in a tour of the Shepherd Center (S.H.A.R.E. initiative) in Atlanta to discuss the synergy between their out-patient program and the new Transition Support Unit in Milledgeville.

On Tuesday, October 25, 2022, Commissioner Ross evaluated the physical storage capabilities at the Central Office. She had the following meetings: Tyler Tech Briefing, October Veterans Service Board Meeting, Miner Agency Biweekly Meeting, and the HOME-ARP & GMA Program Overview with Mr. Vincent Abril.

On Wednesday, October 26, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Social Services Workgroup in the West Tower, along with Kerry Dyer, to help identify ways to attract and retain talent within state organizations. She also attended the Unite Us Weekly Meeting. She spent the evening at the Korean National Foundation Day Reception at The Commerce Club in Atlanta, along with Kerry Dyer.

On Thursday, October 27, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a GDVS/TCSG Unite Us follow-up meeting, and a Sole Source Meeting with DOAS (also in attendance were Kerry Dyer and Mark Demers).

On Friday, October 28, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the GWVH RFP Discussion meeting. She also attended the National Security Forum at the Museum of Aviation in Warner Robins.

On Monday, October 31, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting.

**Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

On Tuesday, November 1, 2022, Commissioner Ross took part in a discussion with representatives from Alabama regarding our Training and Professional Development Division (also in attendance were Shelly-Ann Simpson, Charlotte May and Steven Fay). She also took part in a Unite Us meeting. In the evening, she picked up Director Jerri Sher for the screening of the documentary *Quiet Explosions – Healing the Brain*. She was a panelist for the Q & A that followed the screening.

On Wednesday, November 2, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a portion of the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery Milledgeville Expansion Kick-Off Meeting. She then attended the Marietta Rotary Veterans Day Luncheon, the Unite Us weekly meeting, and a Data Sharing meeting with the Department of Corrections (also in attendance were Kerry Dyer, Jerry Lahr, Mark Demers and Shelly-Ann Simpson). She was the guest speaker at the Atlanta Chapter of Teneo meeting in the evening.

On Thursday, November 3, 2022, Commissioner Ross hosted RADM Holsey (CO for NAVPERS) and his staff for a meet and greet. Also in attendance were Mr. Rick Spearman (City Planner, US Navy Office of Community Outreach), ENS Evan Karanovich (Volunteer City Planner and Public Affairs Officer, US Navy Reserve), and VECTR representatives. In attendance from GDVS were Shelly-Ann Simpson, Kerry Dyer, Charlotte May, Bobby Davis, and Veda Brooks. The focus of the discussions centered around military transition and employment.

On Friday, November 4, 2022, Commissioner Ross and Mark Bannister represented GDVS and were the featured speakers during the morning session of the GHPCO Veterans Community Partnership Workshop at The Infantry Museum in Columbus.

On Saturday, November 5, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Banquet. Sarita Dyer (wife of Chief Operations Officer Kerry Dyer) was inducted this year.

On Tuesday, November 8, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a meeting to discuss PruittHealth (with Mark Bannister and Russell Feagin). She also had a meeting with Amon Martin (the regional Vice President of Pennrose), Shelly-Ann Simpson, and Veda Brooks to discuss veteran affordable housing. Her day ended with the Miner Agency Biweekly meeting and a Fox Grant meeting.

On Wednesday, November 9, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a meeting with Tyler Arnold to discuss the PruittHealth contract for the Georgia War Veterans Home (with Mark Bannister and Russell Feagin). She then hosted the Annual Veterans Day Proclamation Ceremony at the State Capitol with Gov. Kemp. She ended the day with the weekly Unite Us meeting.

On Thursday, November 10, 2022, Commissioner Ross and Steven Fay presented at the Atlanta Senior Care Network meeting. She then hosted a meet and greet with Dean Rakoskie, the new VFW State Commander, and his staff (Jeff Carroll, Tony Dobbins, Joel Willis, Arnold Gonzales, Belinda Boldoe,

**Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

Susan Simmons, Theodore Beal, and Cara Jackson). In attendance from GDVS were Shelly-Ann Simpson, Charlotte May, Lily Snyder, Veda Brooks, Calandra Ferguson and Mark Demers.

On Friday, November 11, 2022, Commissioner Ross was the keynote speaker at the Walk of Heroes Veterans War Memorial Service.

On Saturday, November 12, 2022, Commissioner Ross participated in the annual Veterans Day Parade, was a featured speaker at the Battery Veterans' celebration, and attended the Freedom Ball at the Ocean Ballroom in the Georgia Aquarium.

On Monday, November 14, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She also attended the GWVH RFP Meeting, met with Jeanette Gilles from America's Warrior Partnership, and was the keynote speaker for the American Legion Post 140 meeting in Buckhead.

On Tuesday, November 15, 2022, Commissioner Ross took part in the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force Monthly Meeting, had lunch with Unite Us representatives, and had a team meeting with Unite Us to discuss implementation. She also met with the VA VetResources Community Network to receive tools, promising practices, advice and connections with community and strategic partners.

On Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Jarrad Turner from America's Warrior Alliance. She, along with and Kerry Dyer and Will Wilson, met with DDS regarding the MOU between our departments. The Commissioner also met with a representative from Qualtrics regarding VetConnect. She then listened in on the GWVH RFP meeting and ended the day attending a NextGen Townhall (state system upgrade) meeting.

On Thursday, November 17, 2022, Commissioner Ross held an Open Forum for the department. She also spoke to student leaders from Johns Creek High School in the House Chamber at the Capitol.

On Friday, November 18, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Marcus Ruzek from the Marcus Foundation, Joe Brennan, CEO of Avalon Action Alliance, Dr. Jim Kelly, National Director of TBI for Avalon, and Shauna Green from the Arthur Blank Foundation. The Marcus and Blank Foundations provided lessons learned for their supported programs and the team discussed referrals to the new transition support unit at the Milledgeville facility. Also in attendance we members from PruittHealth.

On Monday, November 28, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, November 29, 2022, Commissioner Ross attending a meeting with the Miner agency and discussed support to the women's program, suicide prevention, and Unite Us implementation. Commissioner Ross also launched the annual survey to the department.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Thursday, December 1, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Unite Us weekly implementation meeting.

On Friday, December 2, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the GWVH RFP Discussion meeting with the larger group, and a later Contract and RFP Discussion meeting with her team. She was then interviewed by Kimberly Dinkins with SK Battery.

On Sunday, December 4 through Tuesday, December 6, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the 33rd Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators in Athens.

On Wednesday, December 7, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Vetlanta Q4 Summit at the Atlanta History Center. She also participated in the Unite Us weekly meeting.

On Saturday, December 10, 2022, Commissioner Ross and Kerry Dyer attended a holiday party celebrating the graduation of students from the University of North Georgia.

On Monday, December 12, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, December 13, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the SAMHSA 988 partner convening meeting.

On Wednesday, December 14, 2022, Commissioner Ross, Mark Bannister, Russell Feagin, Carlton Deese, and Dr. Brian Moore from the AMES Research Center met with the Senate subcommittee on Georgia War Veterans' homes.

Highlights: Unite Us roll out for the department. Offices are slowly referring veterans to outside resources and the Unite Us team is on-boarding community partners.

On the horizon: Legislative session with seven proposed changes from GDVS. Also requested funding for a \$5,000 raise for VSOs and Cemetery workers, and the digitization of our DD-214s.

Commissioner Ross added the following to her report:

Two additional homes were recommended for the short-term, in Dahlonega (North Georgia) and Waycross (South Georgia). In the long-term, one was recommended in the Atlanta Metro area. We will need to meet with OPB and discuss how to move forward since we are outside the standard budget cycle. The VA grants 65% of construction funds and the state has to provide the remaining funds. We will email the feasibility study to the Board members.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

GDVS proposed 7 pieces of legislation. Three of these can be handled outside of the legislative process. For the four that made it through, we need to find sponsors. Commissioner Ross commended Charlotte May and Mark Demers for their work on this. We had the highest acceptance rate of any state agency for proposed legislation.

We have submitted for a raise for our VSO's and cemetery workers. The VA will be hiring more raters because of the Pact Act and that may take some of our employees away, since the VA pays more. We also submitted to have our DD214's digitized. A discussion on ways to improve our attrition rate ensued. Board members suggested additional benefits to help make up the difference. Since that is not possible, other incentives were suggested such as work at home opportunities, using interns, having young college graduates work for the experience. Commissioner Ross stated that we are looking at various incentives we can offer.

Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

GENERAL

- October 25, met with Vincent Abril and Kelly Evans of GA Department of Community Affairs who briefed us on the Home American Rescue Plan and the Georgia Mortgage Assistance Program.
- October 28, attended Kick off meeting for the SSG Fox Grant with AMES.
- November 3, met with Rear Admiral Holsey, Commander Navy personnel Command as part of Navy Week Atlanta.
- November 9, the department in conjunction with the Governor's office held our annual Veteran's Day Proclamation ceremony in the North Wing of the State Capitol.
- November 10, department leadership met with VFW leadership in the Pete Wheeler Conference room.
- November 12, participated in the Veteran's Day Ceremony at St. Mary Mother of God in Jackson, Georgia. This was a collaboration effort with former PID director Brian Zeringue. I presented 30 Certificates of Honor to local veterans including 3 to WWII veterans.
- November 14, Attended the ACE-SI ASK Suicide intervention prevention training at the Augusta VAMC. Visited the Greensboro and Conyers offices.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters:**

- 929 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in October 2022.
- 657 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in November 2022

PROJECTED POSITIONS

Current openings in Augusta GWVNH, Cartersville, and Newnan

Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division

- October 31, 2022, Ms. Ramona Roper and Steven Fay made a site visit to the Lagrange VFSO.
- November 1-3, 2022, Mr. Steven Fay made a site visit to the Fort McPherson VFSO and trained the new employee.
- November 3, 4 and 7, 2022, Ms. Sherri Whitfield made a site visit to the Macon VFSO and trained the new employee.
- November 9, 2022, Ms. Sherri Whitfield made a site visit to the Dublin VFSO.
- November 7, 8 and 9, 2022, Mr. Charles Isaac made site visits to the Savannah and Hinesville VFSO's.
- November 30-December 2, 2022, Mr. Steven Fay trained the new employee for the Atlanta Balcony VFSO.
- December 2, 2022, Ms. Ramona Roper made a site visit to the Gainesville VFSO.
- December 7, 2022, Ms. Ramona Roper and Sherri Whitfield made a site visit to the Dublin VFSO.

Upcoming Events:

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices
- Continuation of Quality Review checks of VSO's work
- Continuation of Field Office visits
- Planning the 2023 Annual (Regional) Training Conferences
- New monthly DROP class will commence in January 2023

Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for November 2022 was **53.**

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- The total number of pre-hearing actions for November 2022 was **178**. The total number of Post-hearing actions was **48**.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) for the month of September was **477**.
- The monthly financial data is not generated by the VA until the 10th of each month or later. The December 1st financial data will be updated and changed on or before the December Board meeting.
- As of **November 01, 2022**, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS.

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	102018	\$190,992,434
DIC	3376	\$5,174,550
Survivor Pension	831	\$708,090
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	1,677	\$1,831,400
Grand Total	107,892	\$198,706,474

The total benefits awarded to Georgia veterans and their families increased again. The increase through the end of October 2022 from the previous month is \$1,353,720.00.

- As of **December 01, 2022**, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS.

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	102,215	\$192,027,371
DIC	3418	\$5,238,931
Survivor Pension	821	\$701,889
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	1,649	\$1,810,605
Grand Total	108,103	\$199,778,797

The total benefits awarded to Georgia veterans and their families continues to trend upward. The increase from the end of October 2022 through the end of November 2022 is \$1,072,323.00.

Ken Childre, Director of North Region

October 2022 total retro awards reported by the North Georgia offices: \$2,608,179

Included in that amount is a single award reported by:
Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-\$267,417.34 (Hunt-6990)

Director Site Visits/Inspections-8

19 October (Rob Johnson-Griffin)

Met with 19 Veterans (ranging from Korean War to Desert Storm) at the Georgia National Guard Retirees Association in Thomaston. Primary points of discussion were how to get DD214s and VA medical care. Also talked about the new Pike County VA Clinic and death benefits.

20 October (Rob Johnson-Griffin)

Addressed the Griffin Rotary Club. 57 attendees, 17 were Veterans. Briefed the GDVS PowerPoint to the club. Spoke with 2 Veterans afterwards about their claims. Also talked with LTC (Ret) Randy Peters, Chairman of the Spalding County Military Affairs Committee and Dave Lamb of Care Master about getting listed as a resource on Unite Us.

North Georgia Gains/Losses:

Randy Gray (Ft McPherson)-New Hire Effective 3 Oct

Melissa Pritchett (Marietta/Cartersville)-New Hire Effective 3 Oct/Transferred to Cartersville 17 Oct

John Giddens (Demorest)-New Hire Effective 17 Oct

Fiedland Telon (Lawrenceville)-New Hire Effective 17 Oct

ChanDreas Barkley (VECTR North)-Transferred from Cartersville/Opened new VECTR North Office Effective 17 Oct

Daniel Moreno (Zebulon)-Opened new Zebulon Office Effective 17 Oct

Joel Grice (Augusta GWVNH)-Resigned Effective 18 Oct

North Georgia Interviews:

Lawrenceville-12, Oct-5 candidates/3 interviewed

Demorest-13, Oct-7 candidates/3 interviewed

Marietta-26, Oct-5 candidates/2 interviewed

Atlanta Balcony-27, Oct-5 candidates/3 interviewed

**Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		October-22					
A	B	C	D / E		G		G / E
			D	E	F	H	H
			Total	Work	Average	Total	Average
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Office	Claims	Claims
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Visits	Submitted	Submitted
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Per	VA	By VFSOS
					Day	Monthly	To VA
							Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	50	12,803	871	14.70	2,431	2.79
Number of Offices:		28	Average Visits/Office:		457.25	Average Claims/Office: 86.8214286	

*Total monthly office visits include: 3051 In-Person and 9,752 phone calls/emails.

November 2022 total retro awards reported by the North Georgia offices: \$1,494,037.00

Included in that amount are single awards reported by:

Barry Hunter (Rome)-\$136,139.22 (Atwater-4008)

Bill Smith (Lafayette)-\$194,730.06 (Berry-1465)

Director Sit Visits/Inspections: 5

Veterans Day Events:

5 Nov

Beth Humble (Dalton)-Murray County Veterans Day Parade

6 Nov

Beth Humble (Dalton) TPBC-Veterans Recognition Ceremony

7 Nov

Eddie Fontaine (Blairsville)-Mountain Area Christian Academy-Veterans Day Ceremony

9 Nov

Glenn Massey (Gainesville)-University of North GA-Talk w/students and faculty about benefits

Eddie Fontaine (Blairsville)-Fannin County Veterans Day Ceremony

10 Nov

Terrance Leggon (Conyers)-GDOL Veterans Day Resource Fair-Covington Career Center

Maxine Brock (Conyers)-GDOL Veterans Day Resource Fair-Covington Career Center

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

11 Nov

Ken Childre (North Area Director)-Cobb County Veterans Day Recognition Ceremony
 Marie Lundquist (Jasper)-Dawson County Jr High for Vietnam Veterans VVA970
 Barry Hunter (Rome)-Rome's Unknown Soldier, Myrtle Hill Cemetery
 Steve Rood (Rome)-Rome's Unknown Soldier, Myrtle Hill Cemetery
 Kelly Johnson (Dalton)-Flag Setting Ceremony at Whitfield County Courthouse
 Michael Partlow (Hartwell)-Hartwell Elementary School Speaking event
 Eddie Fontaine (Blairsville)-Union County HS Breakfast and Ceremony

12 Nov

Ken Childre (North Area Director)-Veterans Day Parade-Battery at Truist Park
 Vet Hueitt (Ft McPherson)-Veterans Day Event-Six Flags
 Randy Gray (Ft McPherson)-Veterans Day Event-Six Flags
 Kelly Johnson (Dalton)-Dalton Veterans Day Parade/USMC Birthday Event in Dalton

13 Nov

Ken Childre (North Area Director)-Veterans Day Event-Six Flags

28 Nov

Rob Johnson (Griffin)-Spoke at VFW Post 5448. 43 attendees and spoke about DIC, Aid & Attendance and the PACT Act.

North Georgia Gains/Losses:

Dawn Donaldson (Ft McPherson)-New Hire Effective 17 Nov

Sheenah Thrasher (Marietta)-New Hire Effective 17 Nov

Melissa Pritchett (Cobb Multispecialty Clinic)-Transferred from Cartersville/Opened new Cobb Multispecialty Effective 17 Nov

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		November-22					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted By VFSOs To VA Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	51	11,570	829	13.96	2,077	2.51
Number of Offices:		30	Average Visits/Office:		385.67	Average Claims/Office: 69.2333333	

*Total monthly office visits include: 2589 In-Person and 8,981 phone calls/emails.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Childre added that 3 new offices have been opened in the North Region since the last Board meeting – 2 in Cobb County and one in Pike County. Commissioner Ross added that Cobb County has the largest veteran population in the state, with about 45,000. We look to open offices in clinics that provide rent-free space.

Vincent M. Pritchett, Director of South Region

- On October 28, 2022, Miguel Rivera (Savannah field office manager) participated in the Veterans Benefits Seminar at the Okefenokee Heritage Center in Waycross.
- On November 5, 2022, Debbie O'Neal (District manager, S. Region) supported an event hosted by AL Post 313 in Claxton. Vincent Pritchett participated in a Veteran certificate and pin ceremony sponsored by the Sukey Hart chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Warner Robins. The ceremony honored veterans from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. About 40 veterans were presented with certificates and pins.
- On November 6, 2022, Vincent Pritchett did a benefits presentation to members of the 377 Quarter Master Company at their annual/mobility resource fair in Macon. Approximately 45 reservists were in attendance.
- On November 10, 2022, Sonja Martin (Macon field office) gave a Veteran's Day speech to the veterans working at Rivers Edge Behavioral Health in Macon. Sandra Bennett (District manager) gave a high school Dependent Education Assistance briefing at Harris County High School during their Veterans Day event.
- On November 11, 2022, Debbie O'Neal (Lyons field office manager) participated in the Veterans Day luncheon in Vidalia, which she also helped organize. A parade was also scheduled but had to be canceled due to Tropical Storm Nicole. Vincent Pritchett helped present certificates and pins at a Vietnam Veterans ceremony at Carlyle Place. After that event Vince was the guest speaker at a Veterans Day luncheon at the same location. The day's events were hosted by Captain Theron Simpson (USMC Ret.).
- On November 13, 2022, Carol Crawford (Waynesboro field office) was the guest speaker for the Veterans Day event at Phillip Grove Baptist Church in Waynesboro. Vincent Pritchett along with past DAV Commander Patterson were guest speakers at a Veterans Appreciation dinner hosted by Sgt Dan Brown in Macon.
- On November 16, 2022, Vincent Pritchett joined Tim Craig, director of the Veterans Business Outreach Center, to give benefits presentations to Veteran Inmates at Burruss Correctional Training facility.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- On November 22, 2022, Chris Parrish (Waycross field office) was the guest speaker at a Veterans Appreciation Program at the Douglas Career Center in Douglas GA.
- South Region Gains/Losses: None
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 242,136.
- Office Visits for October and November: South Georgia offices handled 5,495 phone calls and emails in October and 5,051 in November.

Average Visits Per VFSO								
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO								
Region:		South Region						
Month:		October-22						
A	B	C	D / E			G / E		
			D	E	F	G	H	
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total	Work	Average	Total	Average	
			Monthly	Days	Office	Claims	Claims	
			Office	In	Per	Submitted	Submitted	
			Visits	Month	Day	To	By VFSOS	
						VA	To VA	
						Monthly	Daily	
	Number of VFSOs:	39	2,663	748	3.56	2,002	2.68	
Number of Offices:	24	Average Visits/Office:			110.96	Average Claims/Office:		83.42

Average Visits Per VFSO								
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO								
Region:		South Region						
Month:		November-22						
A	B	C	D / E		G		G / E	
			D	E	F	H	H	
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total	Work	Average	Total	Average	
			Monthly	Days	Office	Claims	Claims	
			Office	In	Visits	Submitted	Submitted	
			Visits	Month	Per	To	By VFSOS	
					Day	VA	To VA	
					Monthly	Daily		
	Number of VFSOs:	39	2,573	722	3.56	1,832	2.54	
Number of Offices:	24	Average Visits/Office:			107.21	Average Claims/Office:		76.33

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- October 28, 2022, Ms. Brooks, participated in FOX Grant Kick-Off meeting.
- October 29, 2022, Ms. Brooks, participated in the Newnan police Car and Truck show, where she provided compensation and pension information.
- November 1, 2022, Ms. Brooks, presented at the Newnan Kiwanis meeting, where she provided compensation and pension information.
- November 3, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Coweta Veteran Court.
- November 8 to 18, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Dare2Jream, Operation Feed Atlanta, where we were able to serve over 6,000 meals across several counties in metro Atlanta.
- November 11, 2022, Ms. Brooks, participated in the Coweta County Veterans Day Program.
- November 12, 2022, Ms. Brooks, participated in American Legion District 5 meeting where she spoke about UniteUs and suicide prevention training.
- November 14, 2022, Ms. Brooks facilitated High Level review training in Augusta and co-facilitated with Ms. Ferguson the ACE-SI class. We were able to train 4 offices.
- December 1, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Coweta Veteran Court.
- December 2, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in a collaborative round table discussion about Women Veteran housing.

Current committees

- Women's Veterans Health Committee (monthly meetings and joint outreach events)
- Georgia State VFW Homeless Committee
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- Atlanta Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee
- Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee

Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator (SPOC)

- October 28, 2022, Ms. Ferguson, participated in FOX Grant Kick-Off meeting.
- November 8 -18, 2022 Ms. Ferguson participated in the Dare2Jream, Operation Feed Atlanta, where we were able to serve over 6,000 meals across several counties in metro Atlanta and conducted Suicide Prevention Training for all Volunteers (AAR Attached).
- November 14, 2022, Ms. Ferguson Conducted Ask, Care, Escort, Suicide Intervention (ACE-SI) Training to our Augusta, Waynesboro, and Grovetown, Georgia Veteran Service Offices (AAR Attached).
- November 15, 2022, Ms. Ferguson conducted the Monthly Governor's Challenge Meeting.

**Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

- November 29, 2022, Ms. Fergerson met with AMES to start planning for 2023 SSG Fox Grant Suicide Prevention Summit.
- December 6-8, 2022, Ms. Fergerson attended the SSG Fox Post Award Conference.

AAR ACE-SI TRAINING

TITLE TRAINING: ACE-SI

INSTRUCTOR: Calandra Fergerson, SPOC

DATE: 14 November 2022

LOCATION: Charlie Norwood VAMC Downtown 950 15th Street, Room 2D112, Augusta, GA 30901

AUDIENCE: Veteran Service Officers (Waynesboro, Grovetown, Augusta)

PARTICIPANTS:

Carol Crawford
Alicia Stephens
Trenise Jones
John McKenzie
Sharonica Mitchell
Tamika Nicholas
Ian Ketterer
ShellyAnn Simpson

Veteran Service Officers from various locations attended the ACE-SI course on November 14th at the Charlie Norwood VAMC. The attendees participated in a pre-survey to evaluate their knowledge of and comfort level when applying ACE-SI.

During the class when the SPOC told the participants that the veterans would complete a survey during their visit with a VFSO, it caused a disturbance. The veterans complained that the information had not been presented to the field. Executive Director ShellyAnn Simpson and Veda Brooks explained the process, but it wasn't received well by some of the participants. There was a VSO that left the class because they felt this topic was overwhelming and the expectations were unrealistic. Eventually, that same VSO returned and was an active participant throughout the training.

The class was well received, and the participants gained knowledge of the ACE-SI process and how to apply it. This was confirmed by the results of the post survey.

SUSTAIN:

- Classroom Instruction vs Virtual

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Small Classroom Setting
- Director Participation: It was great for the morale of the participants to have their director, Mrs. ShellyAnn Simpson, not only in attendance, but also take the class. It emphasized the importance of learning at all levels.
- Combining classes with Ms. Books Additional Topics
- Pre & Post Surveys

Improve:

1 The SPOC didn't have what was required to facilitate the course. The projector didn't work and there wasn't a backup plan. One of the participants had to use their credentials to display the presentation on the television.

Solution: The SPOC has a computer and a Go-Bag (computer, projector, extension cord, surge protector, HDMI cord, Hotspot, wireless remote).

2. The SPOC discussed the screening process with the participants, but the information had not been released to the field.

Solution: The SPOC will not discuss the screening process. She will instead focus on training the participants to have a working knowledge of ACE-SI, and not only be able to identify signs of a person with thoughts of suicide, but also how to connect them to the required resources.

AAR OFA

TITLE TRAINING: S.A.V.E.

INSTRUCTOR: Calandra Ferguson, SPOC

DATE: 8, 9, 11, 15, 18 November 2022

LOCATION: 3138 Oakcliff Industrial Street Doraville, GA 30340

AUDIENCE: Dare2Jream Operation Feed Atlanta Volunteers

PARTICIPANTS: Various Participants from multiple locations

The Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among SMVF partnered with Dare2Jream: Operation Feed Atlanta (OFA) 2022. OFA goal was to feed and provide essential needs for the homeless, those in shelters, nursing homes, and first responders to include the military. The Governor's Challenge was able to Ask the Question (ATQ) to those recipients to determine if they if they were SMVF that needed

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

to be connected with resources. Dare2Jream volunteers from various locations attended the S.A.V.E. training to better prepare them to identify the signs of someone with thoughts of suicide and to connect them with the proper resource.

The class was well received, and the participants gained knowledge of the ACE-SI process and how to apply it. This was confirmed by the results of the post survey.

SUSTAIN:

- Training for all Volunteers
- Have 1 central training location
- Pre & Post Surveys

Improve:

The SPOC needs a Go-Bag so that she is prepared for all types of training situations.

Solution: The SPOC has a computer and a Go-Bag (computer, projector, extension cord, surge protector, HDMI cord, Hotspot, wireless remote).

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information & External Affairs

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

1. Georgia Department of Veterans Service and Unite Us Team Up to Expand Coordinated Care Network, Streamline Access to Services in Georgia – news release announcing the agency's partnership with Unite Us to develop a coordinated care network to help address the unmet needs of Georgia's veteran population. The program is funded through a \$6.1 million grant received through the Georgia State Fiscal Recovery Fund's Negative Economic Grant program.
2. Veterans Day Message - distributed the department's annual message to honor veterans and families. The message was shared with state veterans service organization commanders and posted on the department's social media channels and website. Copies of the letter were also provided to the Veterans Day Parade Association and veterans in attendance at various ceremonies around the state.
3. GDVS Newsletter – PID published monthly newsletters in October and November. The October newsletter featured a cover story on the VA SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant's implementation, GDVS outreach efforts at the Atlanta Pride Festival, and the first "Get to Know Your VSO" segment focused on Raven Holstick. The November newsletter highlighted Veterans Day in Georgia, the

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Unite Georgia platform, free national park passes, and a spotlight on Steve Futch from the GDVS St. Marys office. The full newsletter is available online at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>.

4. Veterans Benefits Outreach

- a. New office in Marietta and Zebulon – one new GDVS location at the Cobb Multi-Specialty VA Clinic in Marietta in November. PID added the new location to the GDVS website and shared the opening on social media and with local media.
- b. Employee Spotlight – the GDVS celebrated the presentation of faithful service awards for Mark Bannister, Mark Demers, and Debbie Gregory.
- c. Veterans Day in Georgia –
 - i. Shared a livestream of the Governor's Veterans Day Ceremony.
 - ii. Shared invitations to events in Atlanta, Dublin, Fort Oglethorpe, Marietta, Warner Robins, and more to highlight opportunities available for veterans and their families to celebrate all over the state.
- d. Job Fairs and Career Opportunities – shared information on job fairs in several fields, the free Farm Again program offered through UGA's Cooperative Extension Service, and resource fairs in several counties.

Public Information Division Contacts *(Since December 10, 2021)*

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 895
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 775
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 225

GOVERNOR'S (VIETNAM VETERAN) CERTIFICATE of HONOR PROGRAM-

- The latest and most accurate totals (since March 2015) –

State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated **29,710**
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated **23,710**

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – **356**

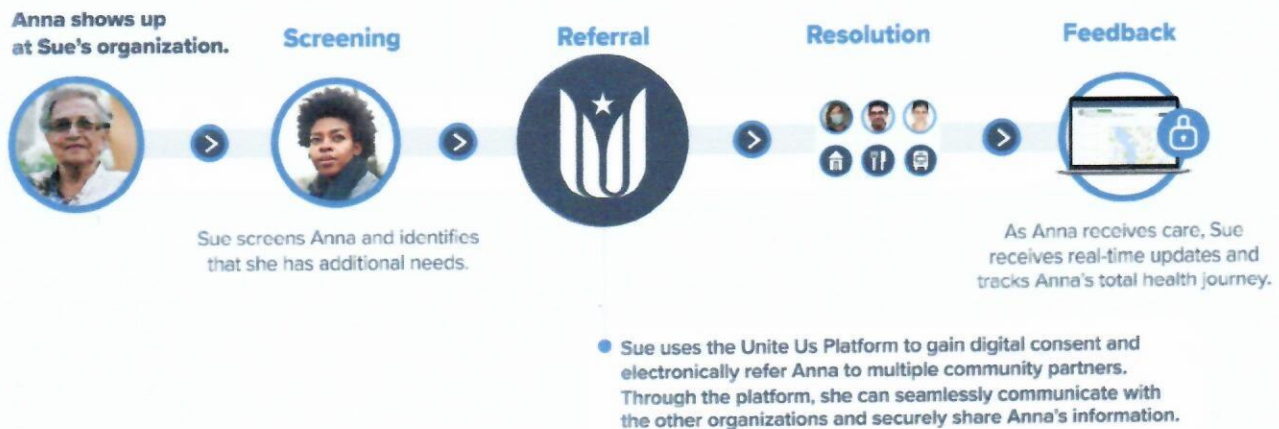
Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – **291**

Mr. Mark Demers, Grant Program Implementation Manager

- Unite-Us Grant- (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- \$18.3m (\$6.1m x 3yrs) effective July 1, 2022:

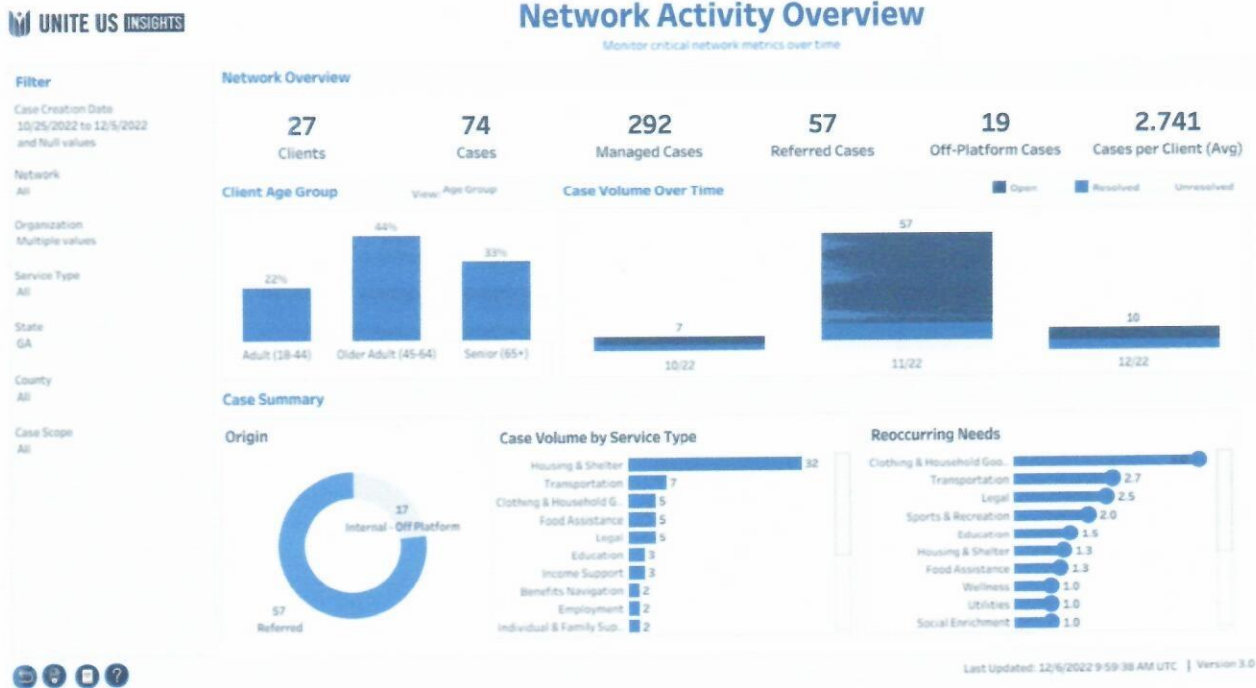
- Unite Georgia is a coordinated care network of health and social service organizations. Partners in the network are connected through Unite Us' shared technology platform, which enables them to send and receive electronic referrals, address people's social needs, and improve health across communities. It is a network of housing associations, education providers, transportation providers, food pantries, reentry programs, healthcare providers, utilities assistance providers, government agencies and much more.

How does it work?



- GDVS/Unite Us Implementation plan went smoothly through all phases (kick-off, workflow sessions, engagement sessions, training, and go-live). The platform went live on October 25, 2022. Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector has been slow but we are moving forward (we have approximately 27k in the system and growing. We have added 389 community partners and 312 healthcare partners to the platform since August 2022. Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights from October 25 to December 5, 2022:

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia



- Grant financial management- vendor management set up, issues with state external auditors (RSM), payments to vendor, and grant reimbursement have been a slow and cumbersome process. Once we got past those obstacles, we made our first invoice payment (July) was completed on October 14, 2022. However, due to state grant system issues, the first reimbursement through the grant system was completed until November 21, 2022. We completed our second payment to Unite Us (August) on November 30, 2022 and submitted for reimbursement on December 5, 2022. We are hoping the process moves much quicker going forward.
- Attended all grant program management training required by the State of Georgia.
- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$747,464 for one year with the possibility to extend two more years). VA will announce renewal opportunities in a NOFO for the following fiscal year. Existing grantees may apply for grant renewal in accordance with any requirements set forth in the NOFO. To apply for renewal of a suicide prevention services grant, the grantee's program must remain substantially the same (otherwise, we will have to submit a new application instead of a renewal application).
 - The Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SSG Fox SPGP) enables VA to provide resources toward community-based suicide prevention efforts to meet the needs of Veterans and their families through outreach, suicide prevention services, and connection to VA and community resources.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- In alignment with VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (2018) and the White House Strategy for Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide (2021), this grant program will assist in further implementing a public health approach that blends community-based prevention with evidence-based clinical strategies through community efforts.
- We are in partnership with Kennesaw State University AMES Center to implement the grant.
- The primary goal of the project is to identify, engage, and provide suicide prevention services throughout the GDVS' catchment area to include Veterans in all 159 Georgia counties, 120 of which are classified as "rural" counties.
 - To identify at-risk areas or "hot spots" of suicidality among Veterans in the state of Georgia.
 - Identify the risk levels of the areas surrounding each of the 55 field service offices across Georgia.
 - Identify risk and protective factors among eligible participants to refer to the appropriate services.
 - Calandra Ferguson or Veda Brooks will report all the outreach and training events regarding Suicide Prevention under the Fox Grant.
- Grant financial management- all financial management functions have been completed in order to draw funds from the Fox Grant.
 - Payment management training was completed on November 2, 2022, from 1600-1800 and November 4, 2022, from 1400-1600.
 - SSG Fox Grant Post Award training completed December 6-8, 2022, from 1300-1700 and December 13-14, 2022, from 1300-1700.

Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)

- The approval and compliance surveys of educational institutions, training establishments and training programs approved for veterans training is continuing with no significant problems in any area being noted.
- Approval of new veteran's On-The-Job training sites (OJT) continues to increase. As of this date the State Approving Agency (SAA) has granted approval to 1,800 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.
- Veteran Student Enrollment Trends information attached from last board meeting

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	389
Approved Training Establishments	1,411
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	20,029

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, November 2022.

Veteran Student Enrollment Trends

The following have been the trends in veteran student enrollment for the years 2018 through 2022.

2018 Average annual enrollment: 16,557
2019 Average annual enrollment: 17,319
2020 Average annual enrollment 16,022
2021 Average annual enrollment 16,590
2022 Average annual enrollment 15,198 as of November 30, 2022

Largest enrollment months are normally October (September certifications are processed in October), January, and May each year.

This data only covers veterans actually receiving some chapter of GI Bill payments (i.e. Chapter 1606, 30, 33, and 35). Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation is not reported in these totals nor any veterans who have exhausted their veteran education benefits.

For Chapter 33 VA does not distinguish between actual veterans or dependents who had Post 9/11 transferred to them. They all count as Chapter 33 beneficiaries.

There could be other factors besides COVID and school closures to account for some reductions in our veteran numbers over the last 5 years, but I don't have any of that data available. As stated above, one factor is the veterans and/or dependents may have exhausted their 36 months of entitlement and would no longer have any benefits remaining for college and hence might still be enrolled in school, but VA is no longer tracking them once benefits have exhausted. In conversations I've had over the last 2-3 years with the University System and our Georgia VA Certifying Officials Association reduced student population in general has been expected for quite some time based on census data which could also be a contributing factor.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Davis added that there is a new program with the Veterans Readiness and Employment Services focused on disabled veterans in which the VA will pay 50% of their salary while they are enrolled in the program.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division

A big thanks to Shawn Hanley and Green Veterans for the Thanksgiving meals provided.

Construction continues.

There are no new Covid cases, but all employees are wearing N95 masks and face shields because of the current rate of cases in the county.

Saturday will be Wreaths Across America at the cemeteries. The ceremony begins at 12:00pm and we will then place the wreaths. This ceremony has been expanded to include private cemeteries this year.

Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, Health & Memorials Division

1. Georgia War Veterans Home has one positive staff member for COVID and no positive patients.
2. Status of staffing by Pruitt Health for Subacute Unit
 - a. Psychiatrist-Pruitt and GDVS members met with Salveo Integrative Health on 12/6/22 to discuss contracting psychiatric services. Pruitt staff then met with Salveo to discuss contract negotiations. At the time of this report, GDVS has yet to receive a briefing from Pruitt on the results of contract negotiations.
 - b. Neuropsychologist- Pruitt is currently contracting with consultant Dr. Jeremy Hertza, through Integrated Psych Solutions.
 - i. GWVH staff met with Dr. Hertza virtually on 11/29/22 for program development.
 - c. Facility Executive Director participates in bi-weekly calls with the Pruitt recruitment staff to update on potential candidates and staffing needs.
 - d. One recreational therapist was hired in November and is currently in orientation.
 - e. LPN/RN- Pruitt is continuing to recruit.
 - f. OT/PT/SLP- Pruitt is continuing to recruit.

3. Status of staff training and program development

- a. Modality training is ongoing for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy (EMDR), biofeedback training, and dynavision training for sensory processing.
- b. Subcommittees developed for program development, marketing, evaluation and assessment tools, treatment pathways, and medication management.
- c. Onsite staff are developing policies, procedures, and treatment pathways for program development.
- d. Staff education is provided through trainers, onsite in-services, and computer courses.
- e. Pruitt staff attended training on 12/1/22 and 12/2/22 for patient de-escalation and safety.

Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVH, Milledgeville, GA

Thanks to Green Veterans for the Thanksgiving meal.

We continue to manage the respiratory illnesses in the building with infection control measures.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer

On Wednesday, October 26, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Commissioner Ross) attended the Workforce Strategies Initiative with Al Howell, Deputy Director, DOAS, Melody DeBussey, Department of Human Services and Yvette Daniels, Department of Public Health. Later that day Kerry Dyer (along with Commissioner Ross) attended the Korean National Foundation Day with the Consul General of the Republic of Korea in Atlanta.

On Thursday, October 27, 2022, Kerry Dyer met virtually to discuss the State as a Model Employer with Rikki David, Louisiana State ADA Coordinator's Office and Doug Crandell, Advancing Employment Director, Institute on Human Development and Disability. Later that day he posted the Veterans Field Service Office vacancies for Dublin, Atlanta Balcony and Marietta.

On Friday, October 28, 2022, Kerry Dyer posted the Veterans Field Service Office vacancy for Valdosta. Later that day he attended the SSG Fox Grant Kick Off meeting along with Mark Demers, Shelly-Ann Simpson, Charlotte May, Veda Brooks and Calandra Ferguson at the Kennesaw State University Campus in Marietta, GA.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Monday, October 31, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director's meeting. Later that day he scrubbed the Gains/Loss Roster, Promotion Merit List, Department Alpha Roster, and Employee position number roster in preparation for the November 1st distribution to the Senior Leadership.

On Monday, November 1, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the UniteUs weekly implementation meeting. Later that day he emailed the potential candidates to the interviewing officials for the Dublin and Marietta Field Offices. He also met with Angeline McClendon, General Counsel Georgia Department of Driver Services to discuss data sharing with GDVS.

On Tuesday, November 2, 2022, Kerry Dyer met virtually with the Georgia Department of Corrections to discuss data sharing. Later that day he submitted the monthly Fleet Managers Report to DOAS, Office of Fleet Management. He also coordinated a site visit to the Cobb Multispecialty Clinic with Ginny Baxter, Facility Manager.

On Wednesday, November 3, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Commissioner Ross and the leadership team) met with Rear Admiral Alvin Holsey to discuss how we can better assist service members transitioning from active duty. Later that day he closed out the external postings for Marietta, Atlanta Balcony and Dublin Field Offices. He also sent the interviewing official the potential candidates for the Atlanta Balcony vacancy.

On Friday, November 4, 2022, Kerry Dyer orchestrated a Central Office Surplus Property inventory. Later that day a(long with Shelly-Ann Simpson and Veda Brooks), he consolidated all of the Department's Surplus in preparation for turn-in to DOAS, Surplus Property Division.

On Saturday, November 5, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Commissioner Ross) attended the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Ceremony in Columbus, GA.

On Monday, November 7, 2022, Kerry Dyer met virtually with Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager, Russell Feagin, Tonya Jarrett, Jenelle Moore, Matthew Carter, DOAS Procurement Manager and Dan Holtz to discuss the Statement of Work for the Georgia War Veterans Home. Later that day he coordinated with Department of Audits and Accounts to ensure GDVS is complying with the Annual Immigration reporting requirements outlined in O.C.G.A 50-36-4.

On Tuesday, November 8, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Ken Childre, Gerald Lahr and Melissa Pritchett) met with Ginny Baxter, Facility Manager at the Cobb Multispecialty Clinic in Marietta, GA to conduct a site visit for an additional Veterans Service Office. Later that day he met with Commissioner Ross, Russell Feagin and Mark Bannister to discuss the contract with PruittHealth and Georgia War Veterans Home. He also met virtually (along with Commissioner Ross and Shelly-Ann Simpson) with Dr. Moore, Director, Center for Advancement of Military and Emergency Service to discuss the SSG Fox Grant implementation.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Wednesday, November 9, 2022, Kerry Dyer, along with Commissioner Ross, Shelly-Ann Simpson, Mark Bannister, Julie Hammond and Shareka Monday-Robinson, attended the Annual Veterans Day Proclamation Ceremony at the Capitol.

On Thursday, November 10, 2022, Kerry Dyer met virtually with the Work Force Strategies Initiative Group along with Commissioner Sullivan, DOAS, Al Howell, Deputy Director DOAS and seventeen other State Agency partners to discuss strategies and programs to boost interest in state jobs and strategies to assist with recruiting and retainment. Later that day he posted the Grounds Maintenance Tech 1 vacancy at the Milledgeville Cemetery externally.

On Saturday, November 12, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Commissioner Ross and Ken Childre) attended the Veterans Day Parade at the Atlanta Battery. Later that day he attended the Veterans Day Freedom Ball along with Commissioner Ross and Shelly-Ann Simpson.

On Sunday, November 13, 2022, Kerry Dyer was the guest speaker at the Vietnam Ceremony at the Way to The Cross Church in McDonough, GA.

On Monday, November 14, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director's meeting. Later that day he met virtually with Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager, Russell Feagin, Tonya Jarrett, Jenelle Moore, Matthew Carter, DOAS Procurement Manager and Dan Holtz to discuss the RFP evaluation process for the Georgia War Veterans Home.

On Tuesday, November 15, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Commissioner Ross, Shelly-Ann, Simpson, Mark Demers, and Charlotte May) met virtually with UniteUs to discuss the GDVS Social Connector Implementation. Later that day he processed a new hire packet for the Milledgeville Cemetery.

On Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Kerry Dyer, attended the virtual Agency Procurement Officer meeting. Later that day (along with Commissioner Ross) he attended a virtual meeting with Department of Drivers Services to discuss the Memorandum of Understanding and Data sharing.

On Thursday, November 17, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the Rotary Club of Roswell Veterans Day Ceremony and discussed Veterans Benefits with the audience.

On Friday, November 18, 2022, Kerry Dyer (along with Shareka Monday-Robinson) attended the VHA Nationwide Onboarding Surge event with the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Shereef Elnahal and VA Southeast Network Director, Dr. David Walker.

On Monday, November 21, 2022, Kerry Dyer met virtually with Monique Jenkins, DOAS, Enterprise Talent Management Services, to discuss the Eperformance implementation for FY 23. Later that day he emailed the interviewing official two potential candidates for the Milledgeville Cemetery and traveled to the Dekalb County Public Library to donate 115 Georgia State Law Books.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Tuesday, November 22, 2022, Kerry Dyer traveled to Mercer Law School, Macon GA, to donate 875 Georgia State Law Books to the Walter F. George Law Library.

On Monday, November 28, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director's meeting. Later that day he met virtually with the State Purchasing Division to discuss the Request for Proposal (RFP) Negotiations (8000L) Course.

On Tuesday, November 29, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the RFP Negotiations Course virtually from Tuesday, November 29, 2022 - Thursday, December 1, 2022. Later that day he graduated and earned his Georgia Certified Purchasing Manager Certification.

On Friday, December 2, 2022, Kerry Dyer posted the Cartersville and Augusta Field Office vacancies externally. Later that day (along with Commissioner Ross) he met virtually with Mark Meeks, Russell Feagin, Tonya Jarret and Jenelle Moore to revise the Statement of Work for the Georgia War Veterans Home.

On Monday, December 5, 2022, Kerry Dyer submitted a Memorandum for Record to Rebecca Krystopa, Policy Operations Manager, State Purchasing Division to request a 10-Year Contract period for the Georgia War Veterans Home.

On Tuesday, December 6, 2022, Kerry Dyer attended the VA SSG Fox Grant Post Award Conference virtually to discuss program development service provisions and monitoring.

On Wednesday, December 7, 2022, Kerry Dyer submitted the monthly Fleet Managers Report to DOAS, Office of Fleet Management.

On Thursday, December 8, 2022, Kerry Dyer was the guest speaker at the Veterans Connection Christmas Luncheon at the Senior Wellness Center in Marietta, GA.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from October 17, 2022- December 16, 2022.

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Augusta VAMC	VFSO 1	Resigned	Joel Grice	10/18/2022
Valdosta	VFSO 1	New Hire	Tisha Hardy	11/16/2022
Marietta	VFSO 1	New Hire	Sheenah Thrasher	11/16/2022
Atlanta Balcony	VFSO 1	New Hire	Dawn Donaldson	11/16/2022

**Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

Milledgeville Cemetery	Grounds Maint Tech 1	New Hire	Christopher Rawlings	12/01/2022
Augusta VAMC	VFSO 2	Resigned	Tamika Murray	12/02/2022
Dublin	VFSO 1	New Hire	Carlas Wooden	12/16/2022

Highlights:

The Office in the Cobb Multispecialty Clinic opened on Wednesday, November 16, 2022.

Mr. Mark Bannister, Executive Director, Health, Memorials, Finance & Development

FINANCE

Accounting

Routine operations are continuing.

Through accounting procedural guidance and assistance from the State Accounting Shared Services, we continue to work together efficiently as a team to complete required end – of – year budget reports, monthly allotments, and amendments. Over the past quarter we’ve made adjustments and improvements in the areas of managing and submitting invoice payments, processing purchase orders – payments to our vendors and State Veterans Homes.

Budget and General

We are looking forward to the start of the 2023 Session of the Georgia General Assembly on or about January 9, 2023, as we prepare to present our FY 2023 budget request.

HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

Selected members of GDVS leadership will attend a scheduled meeting by the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Nursing Facilities on Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 10:00 am. Location is 307 CLOB. The purpose of the meeting is to examine the need for additional State Veterans Homes and to provide useful information and data regarding existing resources and current operations of these facilities to help determine whether future upgrades or expansions are needed.

State Veterans Homes Census (Through December 2, 2022) +

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
 Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
 Atlanta, Georgia

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	97	105	202
Service Connected *	28	39	67
Total Patients	125	144	269
Last Month			
Regular Patients	99	102	201
Service Connected *	27	39	66
Total Patients	126	141	267

* One-hundred percent of the cost of these services is paid by the VA. No state funds are involved.

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from November 4, 2022, through December 2, 2022.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home – Augusta

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia War Veterans Home – Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (Through December 2, 2022) +

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,183	2,193	10
Milledgeville	4,938	4,964	26
Total	7,121	7,157	36

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from November 4, 2022, through December 2, 2022.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

On Tuesday, November 2, 2022, I traveled to Milledgeville for a meeting with the Director, Health, and Memorials Division, 2KM, and Mr. Steven Rogers, Project Manager – Landscape Architect, Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, to discuss Phase IV expansion/renovation. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the details of the grant process and to validate what will be included in the renovations/expansion of the Milledgeville Cemetery. Mr. Rogers and the architects from 2KM addressed questions and concerns regarding the future expansion project. Further discussions involving the cemetery expansion will be planned at a future date.

Veterans Service Foundation Board

The Foundation Board Chairman, Mr. Doug Middleton will provide an update.

Mr. Bannister added that the sub-committee meeting on Georgia homes went well but is still in the initial phase. There will be future meetings with the appropriations committee. The proposed homes will be a smaller version, with 128 beds and more like a home than a clinic.

2023 General Assembly starts January 9 and goes through the end of March.

OLD BUSINESS:

Savannah Potter-Miller and the discussion on veteran treatment courts will be postponed until a future meeting. Mr. Peterson announced that three veterans graduated from the Henry County Veteran Treatment Court on Dec. 9. Veteran mentors worked with these veterans and their families were present to cheer them on.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Happy Holidays and New Year to everyone!

NEW BUSINESS:

The visitors from Kaiser Permanente were unable to attend today.

**Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

The January Board meeting was tentatively scheduled for January 19th at 9:30am, but was later changed to Wednesday, January 25 at 12:30pm after the Board had time to weigh in and discuss it further. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

Board elections were held:

Mr. Paslawski nominated Mr. Kopsie as Secretary. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of.

Mr. Kopsie nominated Ms. Swan as Vice-Chair. Mr. Kubinec seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of.

Mr. Paslawski nominated Mr. Hanley as Chair. The vote was unanimous in favor of.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. There were no objections and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:19 p.m.

SIGNED:



Shawn Hanley, Chair

ATTEST:



Joshua Kopsie, Secretary

The next Veterans Service Board meeting will be held in person at GDVS but will also be available via video/telephone conference call on Wednesday, January 25, 2022, at 12:30 p.m. The Webex link is:
<https://georgiadepartmentofveteransservice.webex.com/georgiadepartmentofveteransservice/j.php?MTID=mc9063966592ae2b74f552c41b9e5bef0>

Meeting password: **udYdv2dfW37 (83938233 from video systems)**

Or you can call: **1-844-621-3956**

Access Code: **2331 106 1269**