

Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Chair
Mr. Tim Paslawski, Vice Chair
Mr. John Kubinec, Member
Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
Ms. Takosha Swan, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS
Present: Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer, Chief Finance Officer, GDVS
Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer
Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta
Mr. Joe Couch, Sr. Vice Commander, VFW
Mr. Tony Dobbins, State Adjutant, VFW
Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Ms. Samantha Brown-Parks, Veterans Service Foundation Board Secretary
Ms. Vivian Greentree, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Mr. Don Layne, VECTR Chief Operating Officer
Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVNH, Augusta, GA
Ms. Linda Lavender, Director, Milledgeville Cemetery
Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS
Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training Division, GDVS
Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
Mr. Edwin Berry, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Veda Brooks, Coordinator, Women & Minority Veterans, GDVS
Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Coordinator, Suicide Prevention & Outreach, GDVS
Mr. Gerald Lahr, Network Administrator, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 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. Dyer gave the invocation. Mr. Paslawski led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the May Agenda. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the April minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Kubinec 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 VFW Annual Proficiency Training Conference held at the Doubletree Annapolis, 210 Holiday Court, Annapolis, MD 21401. The training was held from April 21-24, 2024.
 - The VFW annual recertification training provided updated information on VBA matters, the PACT Act, Camp Lejeune Justice Act, and other relevant information.
 - The Department Service Officer participated in the VFW Annual Proficiency Training examination held on April 24, 2024.
- The Department Service Officer attended a GDVS Unite US Refresher Training held on April 30, 2024, 2PM-3PM. The training provided an update on the:
 - Organization User Profile
 - Managing a Client's cases
 - Manage Sent and Group referrals
 - Unite Us Chat
 - Create an out-of-network cases
 - Acting on inbound referrals
 - Managing and closing out cases
- The Department Service Officer attended a VFW Department of GA Council of Administration (COA) virtual meeting held on April 30, 2024, at 7PM.
 - VFW Department of GA business session
- The Department Service Officer attended a GDVS/ (AMES) Center for the Advancement of Military and Emergency Services virtual training session held on May 01, 2024, at 8AM – 9AM on self-care.
 - Provided tools on taking of oneself.
 - Techniques to establish a work-life balance.

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- Identify the symptoms of stress, burn-out, etc.
- The Department Service Officer participated as a member on the VFW Department of GA annual awards committee. The meeting was held on May 03, 2024, at 10:30AM at 4952 Columbus Road Macon, GA 31206.
 - VFW Department of GA awards committee selection session
- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/Community Partner PACT Information and Listening meeting hosted by Lauren Ruchin, Atlanta VHA. The virtual meeting was held on May 09, 2024, at 12PM – 1PM.
 - The purpose of the meeting was to share information about the PACT Act and to discuss how our Veterans are being impacted by the PACT Act.
 - We discussed ways to ensure that our Veterans gain access to the healthcare, benefits, and resources they earned and deserve!
 - Provided Veterans' feedback about the PACT Act Outreach initiatives.
 - Discussed upcoming Outreach events.

Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

- Virtual Post Officer training was held for District 6 Post service officer. Department service officer trained PSO on roles and responsibilities of Post Service Officers.
- April 30, 2024, Southwest Georgia held a Veteran and Family Alliance virtual event. The Assistant Service Officer attended the event virtually and provided the organization with the latest information on Veteran Benefits. Local American Legion Bainbridge Post attended.
- May 8, 2024, Department Service officer attended Monthly PACT Act Information & Listening Session for Veteran Service Organizations and Community Partners. During this session Atlanta VAMC shared information about the PACT Act and assisting Veterans in gaining access to the healthcare, benefits, and resources.
- May 16, 2024, Department Service Officer and Assistant Service officer attended 2024 Q2 Nationwide American Legion Service Officer Meeting

Upcoming events:

- Monthly Virtual Post service officer training will be held for new service officers. Training topics will be on the roles and responsibilities as a post service officer. This training will continue to be held monthly as new service officers arrive.
- May 18, 2024, American Legion Post 232 Homeless Outreach event

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- June 28-30 State Convention

Mr. Tony Dobbins, Veterans of Foreign Wars, State Adjutant

The VFW Department of Georgia will be conducting its annual cookout at the Milledgeville War Veterans Home on Saturday, May 11th from 10 am – 2 pm. We will provide BBQ sandwiches, coleslaw, potato salad, chips, assorted desserts, and drinks for approximately 100 veterans, staff, and volunteers. This event is always conducted the Saturday before Mother's Day, weather permitting.

The Department of Georgia will be conducting its State Convention at the Macon Convention Center at 200 Coliseum Drive. A Memorial Ceremony recognizing deceased department members will be held on Thursday, June 6th at 7 pm with the opening of the convention on Friday, June 7th at 8:30 am. The new Department leadership will be elected and installed on Sunday, June 9th around 10:30 am.

The 125th VFW National Convention will be held in Louisville, KY from July 29th through August 1st. Alfred "Al" Lipphardt from Stone Mountain will be installed as the third ever VFW National Commander-in-Chief from Georgia on August 1st. Please visit vfw.org, Media & Events for more information.

A Commander-in-Chief Homecoming Event will be held in Savannah from August 22nd – 25th at the Hyatt Savannah Hotel. All are welcome to attend. Go to the VFW Georgia website at georgiavfw.org for more information and registration materials.

Commissioner Patricia Ross

On Tuesday, April 23, 2024, Commissioner Ross met with Unite Us. She then attended the Veterans Service Board Meeting. She also had a meeting to discuss the renovation on the 9th floor. At the end of the day, she met with Mark Demers and Russell Feagin on funding.

On Wednesday, April 24, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended Governor Kemp's Veterans' bill signing at the Capitol. She also had a meeting with Georgia Building Authority to discuss the timeline for office renovations and a Next Gen Townhall meeting.

On Thursday, April 25, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the Military Entrepreneurship Roundtable in Marietta with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (Syracuse University).

On Friday, April 26, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the Warrior Alliance Outreach Event in Augusta.

On Saturday, April 27, 2024, Commissioner Ross was a guest speaker at the Military of the Purple Heart Annual Convention in Columbus.

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On Monday, April 29, 2024, Commissioner Ross, along with the Veterans Service Foundation Board and FISERV, sponsored the Legislative Update Breakfast at the Metro Atlanta Chamber. She then attended a bi-weekly Unite Us meeting and a Fox Grant Update meeting.

On Tuesday, April 30, 2024, Commissioner Ross held a Director's meeting. She then attended a meeting with Unite Us.

On Wednesday, May 1, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended a meeting with Unite Us. She then took part in the 2024 Annual Training Slide Presentation meeting.

On Thursday, May 2, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended DBHDD's Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (now a permanent member via 2024 legislation) in the West Tower.

On Monday, May 6 through Wednesday, May 8, Commissioner Ross attended the Fox Grant Recipient conference in Texas along with representatives from all other grantees.

On Friday, May 10, Commissioner Ross took part in the Days of Remembrance Holocaust Observance at the Capitol. She then attended a meeting regarding SB 449 which allows for military medics and corpsmen to more easily transfer into healthcare career fields. She also took part in a panel prep call regarding the Rosalyn Carter Mental Health Forum.

On Monday, May 13, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the Georgia National Guard Retiree Day in Marietta. She also compiled information on energy initiatives at military installations in the state for a representative who was speaking on an energy panel later in the week. The organizations selected for the AFY25 Mental Health Grant were notified of their selection: Cohen Veteran Network and Emory Healthcare Veterans Program.

On Tuesday, May 14, 2024, Commissioner Ross served on the veteran panel at the 28th Rosalyn Carter Georgia Mental Health Forum along with the Martin Medical Center Commander (FT Moore) and Emory Healthcare Veterans Program. She also met with Commissioner Tanner DBHDD and First Lady Marty Kemp who also spoke at the forum. Later she attended the Georgia Technology Authority's (GTA) webinar on Artificial Intelligence. She also submitted an application for the Foundation to be approved for discounted MARTA passes for homeless veterans (greatest barrier to stabilized housing for veterans receiving HUD/VASH vouchers).

On Wednesday, May 15, 2024, Commissioner Ross held a Director's meeting. She then took part in a National VA partnership meeting.

On Thursday, May 16, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the State Workforce Development Board, and the We Care Event in Rome, GA. In the evening, she attended the TWA Impact Awards Gala.

On Friday, May 17, 2024, Commissioner Ross led the GDVS Leadership Institute on the subject of "Lessons Learned." She then attended the Tunnel to Towers Groundbreaking in Cobb County. Later she attended a meeting on private funding to support the War Veterans Homes.

On Saturday, May 18, 2024, Commissioner Ross was a speaker at Thunder over Evans at the Evans Town Center Park.

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On Monday, May 20, 2024, Commissioner Ross held a Director's meeting. She then met with Public Consulting Group. They are working on a project to assess the needs of veterans in North Carolina and the rise in the number of women veterans. They wanted to see how we deal with the similar issues in Georgia. She later met with the VA and GTA concerning rural veterans and broadband connectivity.

Upcoming:

Hiring Interviews for a Transition and Employment Coordinator and Homeless Veteran Coordinator

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

GENERAL

- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters: 149** Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in April 2024.

Ms. Ramona Roper, Director of Training Division:

- April 27, 2024, Ms. Ramona Roper, and Mr. Charles Isaac attended the Military Order of the Purple Heart annual conference in Columbus, GA.
- May 1-31, 2024, the members of the Training Division continued in completing the 2024 GDVS Annual Training conference in Helen, Georgia. This includes finalizing class rosters, class breakdowns, and instructor preparations. Also, completion of slide presentations for grammar and spelling.
- May 10, 2024, Mr. Charles Isaac participated in a Relay for Life in Hinesville, Georgia. After the walk, he discussed veteran's benefits with several participants.
- May 15 and 22, 2024, Ms. Ramona Roper assisted the Lamda Sigma Fraternity with their veteran's webinar. This is an annual event. We discuss current changes in veterans benefits as well as all benefits, state and federal, for veterans of Georgia.

Upcoming Events:

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- Collaboration meetings for 2024 Annual Training conference (bi-weekly meetings)

Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for April 2024 was **47**.

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- As of **May 1, 2024**, the Atlanta VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of February 2024:

The grand total of monthly compensation and benefits for the veterans, family members and surviving spouses increased by \$1,657,612.00. The number of awards grew by 381 veterans and family members.

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid
Compensation	106,824	\$238,872,895
DIC	4,098	\$7,040,299
Survivor Pension	717	\$689,679
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	<u>1,403</u>	<u>\$1,668,744</u>
Grand Total	113,042	\$248,271,617
		\$982,498,711 YTD thru 4/30/2024

Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region

- Retro Awards: April 2024-\$2,025,680.11
- Debt Waivered: \$37,906.00
- Director Site Visits/Inspections: 4
- Community Involvement:
- Apr 4-5-Rico Johnson (Gainesville) attended the Georgia POST Implementation Academy Site Visit with the SAMHSA and Governors Challenge team at Clay Army National Guard.
- Apr 26-PACT Act event at Augusta Technical College hosted by Warrior Alliance. Assisted 73 Veterans/family members. Filed 49 Claims.
- Joseph Hurndon (Waynesboro), Alex RiveraJusino & Sharonica Mitchell (Augusta VAMC), John McKenzie & Mary Moore (Augusta WVH), Alicia Stephens & Winslow Hill (Grovetown), Mark Churning (Greensboro), and Matt Williamson & Jeff Coots (Athens)
- North Area Gains/Losses: 0

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Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:			North				
Month:			April-24				
A	B	C	D / E			G / E	
			D	E	F	G	H
						Total	Average
					Average	Claims	Claims
			Total	Work	Office	Submitted	Submitted
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	To	By VFSOS
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	VA	To VA
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	52	7,444	22	338.36	2,098	95.36
Number of Offices:	29	Average Visits/Office:		256.69	Average Claims/Office: 72.3448276		

Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

- On May 15, 2024, Tonjala Moton-Williams and Sonja Martin, from our Macon office, attended a veterans' benefit outreach event in Barnesville, GA. The event was hosted by Mr. Eddie Felton of the City of Barnesville. The briefing focused on assisting veterans with claims, healthcare eligibility information, and information on mental health resources.
- The Georgia Army National Guard held Retiree Appreciation Day on May 13th, 16th, and 18th, in Marietta, Macon, and Savannah, respectively. Sherri Whitfield, Sonja Martin, Sheri Shellman, and Dennis Boothe participated by setting up a vendor table with information on GDVS and veterans' benefits.
- On May 17, 2024, the Bainbridge VSO was permanently closed. This office had been used as a "part-time" office.
- South region offices reported lump sum payments since the last board meeting of \$703,861.32 with the highest single amount of \$109,827.85, for a surviving spouse, reported by the Savannah field office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 237,759.**

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Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- April 26, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in the Warrior Alliance TWA/VA PACT Act, at the Augusta Technical Collage.
- April 27, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in the Military Month of the Child on Fort Moore, Army Base.
- April 29, 2024, Ms. Brooks attended First GDVS Foundation Annual Legislative Update Breakfast.
- April 30, 2024, Ms. Brooks attended a meeting with veteran women in Clayton County in reference to a Women Veteran Safe Place. Ms. Brooks did her final walk through at the American Legion Post 232, delivered flyers to churches and food banks in the Gwinnett County area.
- May 1, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in the Lamar County Outreach Walkthrough.
- May 2, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in community service a Riverdale Shelter intake center for women.
- May 3, 2024, Ms. Brooks was interviewed by Herman Anderson, "Veteran's Today", on WCEG Talk Radio, Speaking Life into the Community. https://wcegtalkradio.com/members/herman-anderson/herman-img_2930-3/

Current committees:

- Violence Prevention Task Force
- 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
- Farmer Street Cemetery Commission

Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator

- April 24, Ms. Ferguson conducted outreach in Clayton County, visited food banks, delivered food to a veteran, and provided materials for Suicide Prevention.
- April 25, Ms. Ferguson conducted outreach in Clayton/Fayette County, delivered Suicide Prevention materials to American Legions and Veteran of Foreign War lodges, spoke with Commanders, and scheduled training events.

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- April 26, Ms. Ferguson participated in a PACT ACT event @ Augusta Technical College.
- April 27, Ms. Ferguson participated in The Month of the Military Child event @ Ft. Moore.
- April 29, Ms. Ferguson attended the GDVS Foundations Legislative Breakfast.
- April 30, Ms. Ferguson attended the monthly Director's Meeting conducted by Commissioner Ross.
- May 1, Ms. Ferguson attended the Priority Group 2 monthly meeting.
- May 2, Ms. Ferguson met with the director of the Barnesville Civic Center to do a walk through for a Veterans Benefit outreach event on May 15 in Barnesville. She also met with an officer of the American Legion and provided Suicide Prevention Material for his post.
- May 3, Ms. Ferguson conducted outreach in Macon, met with a representative of the VFW, provided Suicide Prevention materials, and scheduled an in person training.
- May 8, Ms. Ferguson presented S.A.V.E. to Tru-Therapy of Augusta.

Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer/Chief Financial Officer

Accounting/Procurement:

- Routine operations are continuing. We are continuously working to improve all accounts payable processing, to apply proper coding, accountability, organization of purchase orders, and on time payments.
- We are working with the SAO Shared Services to prepare the procurement and accounting data in Team Works for migration to Workday.
- Camala Ball reviewed the SAO report to identify Concur fees that were set to pay on the next cycle. Noted chart fields and requested correction to avoid expenses being charged incorrectly.
- Kirsten Dennis is preparing for annual close out/ Next Gen roll out by cleaning up outstanding PO's, requesting credits if needed, and closing PO balances for unreceived items. She is also reconciling Staples' outstanding and current purchase orders.
- Irene Mackson completed P-Card reconciliation training with Stephanie McInnis at DOAS.
- Camala Ball and Mark Demers attended the Accounts Payable SAO webinar on April 25, 2024, at 1000.
- Mark Demers and Camala Ball attended the Accounts Receivable and General Ledger SAO webinar on April 29, 2024, at 1100 and 1300.
- Mark Demers attended the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers (NASACT) webinar on Uniform Guidance Changes-2024 Revision on May 1, 2024, at 1400.

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- Camala Ball attended the OPB Commitment Control webinar on May 6, 2024, at 1100 and the SAO Purchasing Order webinar on May 9, 2024, at 1000.
- Mark Demers and Camala Ball attended the OPB Asset Management webinar on May 6, 2024, at 1300.

Budget:

- Camala Ball prepared the May allotments in PBCS and also created new budget chart fields in preparation for the FY 2025 AOB budget uploads.
- Camala Ball prepared budget realignment to better distribute funds across various object classes (pending approval by OPB).
- Camala Ball created FY 2025 tree maintenance requests to restructure the trees to better suit our agency.
- Mark Demers sent two requests to OPB for permission to cancel old PO's and reissue under same chart fields to reallocate funds to current projects at the Milledgeville GVWH: (1. Treatment cart mounts and wall workstations as well as VoIP phones and 2. Monies to complete the fire door project).
- Issues Encountered: Encountered delays in PBCS entry approvals due to staffing changes at OPB resulting in some voucher payments needing to be approved manually and have been delayed until realignments are approved.

Grant Program:

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$747,464)
 - Irene Mackson completed the latest grant fund draw for \$10,880 on April 30, 2024.
 - Mark Demers attended Fox Grant VA National Webinar on April 16 and May 16, 2024
 - Commissioner Ross attended the Fox Grant Mandatory Conference on May 6-9, 2024, in San Antonio, TX- focus was for organizational leaders.
 - Mark Demers and Irene Mackson attended Fox Grant State Government workgroup on May 9, 2024, at 1400.
 - The SSG Fox Grant Year 3 NOFO was submitted on April 26, 2024, we will find out the results on the second week of September 2024.
 - The SSG Fox Grant Mid-Year Report was submitted on April 30, 2024.
- Unite-Us Grant- (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- \$6.1m per year (\$18.3m) over the course of 3 years starting July 1, 2022:
 - Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector is moving forward. As of May 13, 2024, we have **269,712** veterans in the system. We have submitted **1,088** community partners and **313** healthcare partners for inclusion to the platform since August 2022.
 - The latest quarterly report was submitted on April 3, 2024, with the next quarterly report due in July 2024.

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- The latest Unite Us grant drawdown was on May 13, 2024, for \$19,392.03 with all reconciliation support documents included.
- Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights:



- **Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)**- Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed HB 414 on April 25, 2023, with the support of state legislators and the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS). The bill creates the Veterans Mental Health Services Program, which is a grant program to improve access to mental health services for military service members, veterans, and their families in the state of Georgia. The grant program is funded through state appropriations in Fiscal Year 2023. The total grant funding is \$750,000 for FY2023 (executed by no later than 30 June 2023). The grant was awarded to two vendors:

- Aspire (Cohen Veterans Network) for \$650,000.
- Emory Healthcare for \$100,000.

- The money was allocated to both awardees, and they have received the funds.
- The next quarterly report is projected for July 2024 (year-end close).
- The Governor's budget approved \$1,000,000 for the next grant period with concurrence from the House and Senate.
- The competitive grant process for year 2 (AFY 24) for \$750,000 and is in the evaluation phase.
- Preparations for the FY25 competitive grant process are in progress for \$1,000,000 with a projected June 2025 advertisement in Survey Monkey.

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Veterans Service Foundation:

- The next quarterly board meeting will be on June 6, 2024, at 1000.
- Irene Mackson assisted with the foundation breakfast fundraiser on April 29, 2024.
- Completed the Georgia State Charitable Contributions Program paperwork so the foundation could be listed as a charitable organization eligible for payroll deduction. We just have to wait and see if we are accepted for the 2024-2025 year.

Events:

- The entire team assisted with Central Office renovations pack-up and post renovation set-up.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through May 3, 2024) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	88	108	196
Service Connected *	30	34	64
Total Patients	118	142	260
Last Month			
Regular Patients	89	107	196
Service Connected *	31	33	64
Total Patients	120	140	260

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

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers from April 6, 2024, through May 3, 2024.

Normal operations continue at Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home and Georgia War Veterans Home.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (through May 3, 2024)+

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,504	2,515	11
Milledgeville	5,442	5,470	28
Total	7,946	7,985	39

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from April 6, 2024, through May 3, 2024.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVNH, Augusta, GA

Last week was Nursing Home Week and the previous week was Nurse's Week. We had a special service on Friday entitled "Radiant Memories."

We had a DCH survey, and no clinical deficiencies were found.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer

On Wednesday, April 24, 2024, Kerry Dyer spoke to Natasha Simoes, Access Project Manager, regarding the final invoice for the DD214 digitalization project. He also met with Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager, to discuss the timeline for the paint and carpet replacement in the Central Office Suite.

On Thursday, April 25, 2024, Kerry Dyer processed a resignation packet for the Hinesville and Fort Stewart Field Offices. He also contacted Dr. Barry, Southeastern Technical College, to set up a site visit for a potential office space. Later that day he contacted Jack Walsh, V.P Sales and Marketing, Air, Land Sea moving company, to discuss the items that needed to be moved in preparation for the renovation.

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On Friday April 26, 2024, Kerry Dyer posted the Employment and Transition Coordinator vacancy externally and internally. He also spoke to Timothy Saunders, GBA Facilities Operations Technician, to discuss the replacement of the carpet, lights, and ceiling tiles in the Atlanta Balcony Field Office. Later that day he processed one termination packet for the Glennville Cemetery and one new hire packet for the LaGrange Field Service Office.

On Monday, April 29, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with paint and carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Tuesday, April 30, 2024, Kerry Dyer met the paint and carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Wednesday, May 1, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the paint and carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office. Later that day he attended the Annual Tenant Services meeting.

On Thursday May 2, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the paint and carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Friday May 3, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the paint and carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Sunday, May 5, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Monday, May 6, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office. He also signed the one-year contract extension for the Georgia War Veterans Home in Milledgeville.

On Tuesday, May 7, 2024, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director's Meeting. Later that day he met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office. Later that evening he attended the Connecting Cobb Veterans Business Leader Reception at the Bunker at Brasfield & Gorrie.

On Wednesday, May 8, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Thursday, May 9, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

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On Friday, May 10, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office. He also attended the Georgia Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony at the Capitol along with Commissioner Ross.

On Monday, May 13, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office.

On Tuesday, May 14, 2024, Kerry Dyer met with the carpet contractors to discuss the ongoing Renovation Project for the Central Office. Later that day he contacted Jack Walsh, V.P Sales and Marketing, Air, Land Sea moving company, to arrange a pickup date for the 80 crates and 15 speed packs.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from April 16, 2024 – May 16, 2024.

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Hinesville	Office Mgr (VFSO2)	Resigned	Shannon Daniels	4/1/2024
Glennville	Cemetery Tech 1	Terminated	Chris Lee	4/15/2024
LaGrange	VFSO 1	New Hire	Joseph White	4/16/2024
Fort Stewart	Office Mgr (VFSO2)	Resigned	Robert Jones	4/18/2024
Lyons	Sr. Office Mgr	Retired	Debra O'Neal	5/1/2024

On the horizon: Open a Veterans Field Service Office in the Perry Clinic in May/June 2024 timeframe.

Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)

- The approval, risk based surveys, and supervisory visits 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 2,150 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	445
Approved Training Establishments	1,705
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	21,296

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, April 2024
WEAMS

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

1. GDVS Newsletter – The department’s monthly e-newsletter features top stories from the month at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>. The April covered a variety of stories, including the passing of Medal of Honor recipient and Georgia native Col. Ralph Puckett, the signing of new veteran related state legislation, a Senate hearing on the barriers women veterans face to receive care, and invitations to the Let’s Connect Summit and We CARE Veterans Fair.
2. Legislative Breakfast – The Georgia Veterans Service Foundation hosted their first legislative update and breakfast on April 29. State legislators shared information on past, current, and upcoming legislation for veterans benefits in Georgia and answered questions from participants.
 - a. External Affairs and Communications provided support for the event, along with other agency staff. Our division created programs and table cards for guests to learn more and connect with the Foundation. We also worked closely with the Commissioner and Foundation Board members on follow up communications to participants and attendees to recap the event, reemphasize the Foundation’s goals, and connect them with more resources while emphasizing the importance of their support.
3. Benefits outreach – External Affairs and Communications continues to work with GDVS staff and partners to educate Georgia’s veterans and families on the availability of benefits and resources.
 - a. PACT Act and benefits fairs – shared recaps from The Warrior Alliance and Augusta VAMC PACT Act event, where GDVS staff helped serve hundreds of veterans. Additionally, we have been proactively promoting the We CARE Vet Fair’s return to Floyd County to encourage as many veterans as possible to attend. External Affairs and Communications have also assisted Ms.

Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Brooks and the outreach team for an upcoming veterans' benefits briefing in Lamar County on May 15.

- b. Mental health resources – shared information on upcoming events focused on connecting veterans with mental and behavioral health resources, including events in South Georgia. Provided additional information on Mental Health Awareness Month in May.
- c. VA mobile apps – shared information on new updates to essential services which VA now allows users to complete through mobile applications, including pharmacy refills, appointments, and checking on upcoming benefits payments.
- d. Employment and apprenticeships – provided information on upcoming open houses for apprenticeship opportunities for veteran families and promoted resume and employment resources from partners with Bridge My Return.

Public Information Division Contacts *(Since December 11, 2023)*

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 175
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 415
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 75



OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Commissioner Ross announced that the Central Office has been renovated with new carpet and paint. Mr. Dyer kept us ahead of schedule on the renovation.

Commissioner Ross announced that the Legislative Breakfast that was sponsored by the Foundation Board has generated positive feedback.

Commissioner Ross announced that the strategic plan is due in June, which is earlier than normal.

Commissioner Ross announced that there are interviews this week for two new positions – Transition and Employment Coordinator and a Homeless Veteran Coordinator.

Ms. Roper announced that Annual Training will be June 3-7 at Unicoi State Park and Lodge in Helen.

Ms. Brooks expressed thanks to Sherri Whitfield and her team for helping at the Barnesville event. She also expressed thanks to Monica Dorsey for the extra work she put in last week for an event.

Mr. Feagin announced that both cemeteries are hosting Memorial Day ceremonies. Milledgeville's ceremony will be at 11 a.m. and Glennville's will be at 11:30 a.m.

Commissioner Ross announced that this year's Memorial Day Ceremony with Gov. Kemp will be on Thursday, May 23 at 10:00 a.m. at the North Wing of the Capitol.

Ms. Holstick announced that Sen. Ossoff is attending the American Legion Convention on June 29.

Mr. Dobbins announced that Commissioner Ross will be speaking at their State Convention on June 8.

Mr. Zayas announced that the following cities are or will be new Purple Heart Cities: Jonesboro, Forest Park, Peachtree Corners, Clayton County, and Lake Spivey.

Commissioner Ross that the digitalization of the DD214s has been completed and it is working great.

Ms. Swan announced the Ode to American Memorial Day concert event on May 27th at 7:30 p.m.

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NEW BUSINESS:

We have a new OPB analyst. She and her supervisor will be at the site visits to the Augusta and Milledgeville homes.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for July 24 at 12:30pm. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

Mr. Kopsie adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:04 p.m.

SIGNED:


Joshua Kopsie, Chair

ATTEST:



Steve Mendez, Secretary