

**Thursday, November 16, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

**Present**        Mr. Shawn Hanley, Chair  
                    Ms. Takosha Swan, Vice Chair  
                    Mr. John Kubinec, Member  
                    Mr. Tim Paslawski, Member  
                    Mr. Pete Peterson, Member  
                    Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

**Visitors:**     Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS  
**Present**        Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS  
                    Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS  
                    Ms. Jehae Kim, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office  
                    Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS  
                    Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart  
                    Mr. Don Layne, VECTR Chief Operating Officer  
                    Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta  
                    Ms. Dylester Scott, AMVETS  
                    Mr. Bobby Davis, 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. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS  
                    Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS  
                    Ms. Irene Mackson, Business Support Analyst, GDVS  
                    Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Thursday, November 16, 2023, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Hanley called the meeting to order at 12:39 p.m. Ms. Swan gave the invocation. Mr. Paslawski led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the November Agenda. Ms. Swan seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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

The following reports were submitted for the Board meeting:

**Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta**

Georgia Military Women is strong and growing. We are planning events for the coming year.

The suicide prevention crisis line (9-8-8) goes to call centers based on calling code. Veterans should press "1" to speak to someone who can assist them. If there is a veteran actively attempting suicide, 9-1-1 should be called. GCAL's number is answered by clinicians in Atlanta, who can expedite appointments with county mental health providers.

**Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW**

- The Department Service Officer attended the Department of Georgia VFW and Auxiliary Mid-Winter Conference State Convention on October 20-22, 2023, held at the Macon Marriott City Center, 240 Coliseum Dr., Macon, GA 31217.
  - Homecoming Celebration for the State Commander and State Auxiliary President.
  - Department Council of Administrative Meeting convened to discuss the business of the Department for the remainder of the year.
- The Department Service Officer attended a VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) Eastern Region virtual meeting held on October 26, 2023, at 1PM. We discussed the following:
  - PACT Act Update
  - Sensitive Level Access Request User Guide
  - Veterans May Be Entitled to a 30% Rating for Parkinson's Disease if They Have Unrated Residuals
  - VHA-Uber Health Connect Initiative
  - VHA Update on Changes in Rates VA Pays for Special Modes of Transportation
  - DoD SAFE User Guide
  - Department Service Officer (DSO) concerns.
- The Department Service Officer attended the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual GMVHOF Induction Ceremony & Banquet held at the Saint Luke Ministry Center, 301 11th St. Columbus, GA. in Columbus, GA. The ceremony was held on November 04, 2023, at 12PM.
  - The ceremony honored 15 Georgia Veterans who have served the Armed Forces and who continue to serve their community.
  - Commissioner Ross was inducted into the GMVHOF - Congratulations.



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- The Department Service Officer attended the Annual Veterans Day Proclamation Signing Ceremony. The Georgia Department of Veteran Service (GDVS) hosted the event. The ceremony was held on November 06, 2023, at 2PM, at the GA State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334.

**Ms. Raven Holstick, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer**

- Service officers (Raven Holstick, Tonjala Williams-Moton, Ed Kent) met via Teams to discuss future hospital visits.
- Mr. Melvin Weaver (Commander), Department Service Officer, Assistant Service Officer, Members of Post 333, Members of District 11 and 12 and other Legionnaires visited the [Georgia War Veterans Home at Milledgeville](#) on November 1, 2023. War Home provided a presentation concerning the operations and plans for the home and a tour.
- Mr. Melvin Weaver (Commander), Department Service Officer, Assistant Service Officer, Post service officers and other Legionnaires visited the Dublin VAMC on November 2, 2023. The Hospital provided a presentation concerning the operations and plans for the home and a tour.
- Post 248 held a Veteran Standdown November 4, 2023. GDVS provided VSOs to support this event. VBA provided representatives for this event as well.

**Upcoming events:**

- Monthly Virtual Post service officer training will be held for new service officers. Training topics will be on the roles and responsibilities of a post service officer. This training will continue to be held monthly as new service officers arrive.
- Montgomery, AL VA Visit November 15<sup>th</sup> @1:00
- Tuskegee, AL VA Visit November 16<sup>th</sup> @9:00
- December 8-9 Augusta VA/ Augusta war home visit
- January 9-11 Lake City VA Visit

**Commissioner Patricia Ross**

On Wednesday, October 25, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the Veterans Service Board Meeting. She also met with Bob Hogan from Bridge My Return. She then met with Abigail Ross to discuss OP Capstone at GWVH in Milledgeville.

On Thursday, October 26, 2023, Commissioner Ross was a guest speaker at the Korean Groundbreaking Ceremony for a dedicated space for their war veterans, where she was given a Certificate of Appreciation. She later assisted a veteran by meeting with the VA to discuss the Disruptive Behavior Committee.



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On Friday, October 27, 2023, Commissioner Ross met with her team in preparation for the quarterly financial review meeting with the State Accounting Office (SAO). Everyone then met with SAO to discuss the budget and outstanding purchase orders. She later filmed a video with the Technical College System of Georgia to promote Unite Us/Unite Georgia.

On Saturday, October 28, 2023, Commissioner Ross was a guest speaker at the American Legion Fall Conference in Duluth. She later attended the Fall event with the Republic of China (Taiwan) Veterans Association at the Culture Center of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Atlanta.

On Monday, October 30, 2023, Commissioner Ross met with Shelly-Ann Simpson, Mark Demers and Veda Brooks to discuss the National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators Conference in 2025 or 2026. She then held a weekly Director's Meeting. Later in the day she met with Jared Callaway, a proponent for veterans' mental health and the Emory Veterans Healthcare Program in Georgia. She ended her day in a Unite Us bi-weekly meeting.

On Tuesday, October 31, 2023, Commissioner Ross met with Shareka Monday-Robinson, HR Director. She then attended a meeting at Kennesaw State University. Later that day she attended the class on Social Security.

On Wednesday, November 1, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended a meeting on the state purchase card (P-card). She then attended a meeting with Kim Scofi on 2024 We Care military/veteran fairs. Also in attendance at this meeting were Shelly-Ann Simpson, Kerry Dyer and Mark Demers.

On Thursday, November 2, 2023, Commissioner Ross met with Kajuana Pitts of the VA regarding Unite Us. Also in attendance were Shelly-Ann Simpson and Veda Brooks. She then met with Natasha Simoes of Access Corp regarding the scanning of the DD214's. She ended the day in budget discussions with Mark Demers and Camala Ball.

On Saturday, November 4, 2023, Commissioner Ross was inducted into the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame at a ceremony and banquet in Columbus. Several people from GDVS attended to celebrate this great accomplishment and honor for Commissioner Ross.

On Sunday, November 5, 2023, Commissioner Ross was the Grand Marshal at the Cherry Blossom Veterans Day Parade in Macon.

On Monday, November 6, 2023, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She then was a guest speaker and the emcee for Governor Kemp's Veterans Day Proclamation Ceremony at the Capitol.

On Tuesday, November 7, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended a meeting regarding the P-Card Program. She later had a budget discussion with Camala Ball, Mark Demers, Kerry Dyer and Robert Orange. She ended the day with a follow up call with PruittHealth.



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On Wednesday, November 8, 2023, Commissioner Ross and the ladies of the Central Office decorated a Christmas tree at Town Center Mall. The theme of the tree was suicide prevention. She then attended the Fox Grant Year 2 Kickoff Meeting at Kennesaw State University.

On Thursday, November 9, 2023, Commissioner Ross was on the Eggs and Issues panel in Warner Robins. She then took part in the Monthly VSO/Community Partner PACT Act Information and Listening Session.

On Friday, November 10, 2023, Commissioner Ross was the guest speaker at the Veterans Day Ceremony at the GWVH in Milledgeville.

On Saturday, November 11, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the festivities of the Georgia Veterans Day Association. The festivities included speaking at the Observance Ceremony, being a VIP at the Parade and attending the Freedom Ball at the Cobb Galleria Center.

On Monday, November 13, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended a meeting on the P-Card Program. She then attended a speaking event with Gen. Petraeus at the Buckhead Club. She ended the day with the Unite Us bi-weekly meeting and the Fox Grant Update Meeting.

On Tuesday, November 14, 2023, Commissioner Ross took part in the Connecting Cobb Veterans Event. She then met with the National Veteran Legal Service Program (NVLSP) regarding their Discharge Upgrade Clinic.

On Wednesday, November 15, 2023, Commissioner Ross attended the meeting with senior leadership of veteran organizations and key legislators to collaborate on how to better serve veterans in Georgia. The meeting was held at the Technical College System of Georgia in Atlanta.

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

**GENERAL**

- On November 2, Ms. Simpson and the VSOs in the Balcony Office participated in a Veterans Program at the U.S. Prison Bureau. They met with the employees and discussed PACT ACT and provided advice on filing claims and appeals. Rico Johnson of the Suicide Prevention and Outreach Team, gave a briefing on S.A.V.E.
- On November 4, Ms. Simpson and VSOs from Decatur VAMC and Fort McPherson, participated in the Women Veteran Symposium held at Saint Philips AME Church in Atlanta. We spent the day providing information on the services provided by GDVS to include our cemeteries and homes.

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- On Veterans Day, November 11, Ms. Simpson participated in the observation ceremony and parade held by the Georgia Veterans Day Association.
- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters: 893** Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in October, 2023.

**PROJECTED POSITIONS**

- Current opening in Augusta VAMC and the Cobb Multi-Specialty Clinic.

**Ms. Ramona Roper, Director of Training Division:**

- November 1, 2023, members of the South Georgia Training Division conducted Hybrid Training on the subject *Appointment of a Veterans Service Organization (POA)* via MS Teams.
- November 2, 2023, Mr. Glenn Massey conducted Hybrid Training on the subject *Appointment of a Veteran Service Organization (POA)* via MS Teams.
- November 2-3, 2023, Ms. Ramona Roper and Mr. Steven Fay conducted new hire training at the GWVH for 3 new hires (the Augusta VAMC, the Georgia War Veterans Home and the Grovetown VFSO).
- November 8, 2023, members of the South Georgia Training Division conducted Hybrid Training on the subject *Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*. This subject covers the benefits for surviving beneficiaries of veterans who passed away from service-connected disabilities.
- November 9, 2023, members of the North Georgia Training Division conducted Hybrid Training on the subjects *Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC)* and *Appointment of a Veterans Service Organization*.
- November 11, 2023, Ms. Ramona Roper attended a Veteran's Day ceremony at the Warrens Chapel United Methodist Church in Jefferson, Georgia.

**Upcoming Events:**

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- Continuation of Quality Review checks of VSO's work
- Preparing for 2024 annual Training conference
- Future Hybrid Classes for the Second Quarter



**Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division**

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for October 2023 was 36.
- As of **November 1, 2023**, the Atlanta VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	104,728	\$221,981,588
DIC	3,866	\$6,439,155
Survivor Pension	745	\$693,504
Veteran Pension	1,466	\$1,693,411
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>110,805</b>	<b>\$230,807,657</b>

\*The grant total of monthly benefits paid out continues to increase by over a million dollars each month.

**Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region**

**Retro Awards:** October 2023-\$1,178,298.88

**Director Site Visits/Inspections:** 14 (Mainly to deliver supplies and 2024 CFRs)

**Community Involvement:**

10 Oct-Marie Lundquist (Jasper)-Guest Speaker at Pickens Star Lodge Masons Meeting. 74 attendees and Marie was the guest speaker. She discussed the benefits that are offered by the State of Georgia and Federal benefits. She also discussed Compensation, Pension and DIC. Made 6 appointments after the briefing.

20 Oct-Bill Smith (Lafayette) and Ken Childre attended the Wellness on Wheels Health Fair. Over 50 attendees, and we discussed benefits with 11.

21 Oct-Kyle Hungarter (Marietta) and Ken Childre attended the MilVet Fall Retreat Event. 1st time event so only about 25 attendees. We did discuss benefits with about 8 people and I Kyle set up 3 appointments.

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**North Georgia Gains/Losses:**

13 Oct-Ken Stearns (Terminated Canton)  
 16 Oct-Joseph Hurndon (New Hire Grovetown)  
 16 Oct-Nicole Cruz (New Hire Athens)  
 16 Oct-Melissa Pritchett (Transferred from Cobb Clinic to Canton)

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		October-23					
A	B	C	D / E		G / E		
			D	E	F	G	H
					Average	Total	Average
			Total	Work	Office	Claims	Claims
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	Submitted	Submitted
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	To	By VFSOS
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	Monthly	To VA
							Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	53	8,957	21	426.52	1,811	86.24
Number of Offices:		30	Average Visits/Office:		298.57	Average Claims/Office: 60.3666667	

\*Total monthly office visits include: 2,225 In-person and 6,732 phone calls/emails.

**Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director Veterans Benefits South Region**

- On November 3, 2023, Scott Weaver participated in the BWK Veterans Night Out in Brunswick, GA. This event focused on activities for veterans' families.
- On November 9, 2023, Sherri Whitfield attended a veteran's benefits briefing at the Wrightsville State Prison.
- On November 9, 2023, Kevin Gibbs from our Statesboro office attended a Veteran's Resource Fair at the Ogeechee Technical College.
- On November 9, 2023, Vershawn Moses from our Warner Robins office participated in a veteran's day event in Macon, GA.
- On November 11, 2023, Mark Holmes from our Warner Robins office participated in a Veteran's Benefits Seminar/Workshop.
- On November 14, 2023, Tequila McCoy took part in Sen. Warnock's community resource fair. Sherri Whitfield took part in Sen. Ossoff's constituent event.



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- On November 15, 2023, Debbie O'Neal from our Lyons office participated in a Care Giver Support event at the Dublin VAMC.
- South region offices reported lump sum payments since the last board meeting of \$650,456.31 with the highest single amount of \$198,494.98 reported by the Americus field office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 237,759.

**Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)**

- October 30, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the 2024 NASWVC Conference Planning Meeting.
- October 31, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Munchkin Masquerade where she spoke to children about what veterans are. She also did a home visit on an elderly female veteran to file a claim.
- November 4, 2023, Ms. Brooks facilitated a women veteran's conference at Saint Phillip AME Church.
- November 8, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Governor's Challenge Christmas tree Decoration Day in support of Night of Festival of Trees. Ms. Brooks participated in the Fox Grant Kick off meeting.
- November 9, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in "Conversation with a Vet" sponsored by the Veterans and Community Outreach Foundation.
- November 11, 2023, Ms. Brooks spoke at the Veteran's Day Ceremony in Coweta County.
- November 12, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in Diwali (The Festival of Lights) and the Hindu New Year.
- November 13, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the 2024 Summit Planning Meeting.
- November 15, 2023, Ms. Brooks participated in the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc Phi Pi Omega Chapter.

**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

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- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee
- Farmer Street Cemetery Commission

**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.
- The quarter 1 accounting and procurement review on October 27, 2023, with the State Accounting Office went extremely well. We are on track.
- We have had several meetings with the Department of Administrative Services to establish a Purchase Card program at Georgia Department of Veterans Service. We are in the process of completing the necessary paperwork and mandatory training.

**Budget:**

- As part of the fall legislative development process, we have responded to several inquiries from the Office of Planning and Budget as well as from the Georgia Senate and House. The information was routine budgetary submission follow-up related questions, which were very repetitive.
- The quarter 1 budget review on October 27, 2023, with the State Accounting Office went extremely well. We are on track.

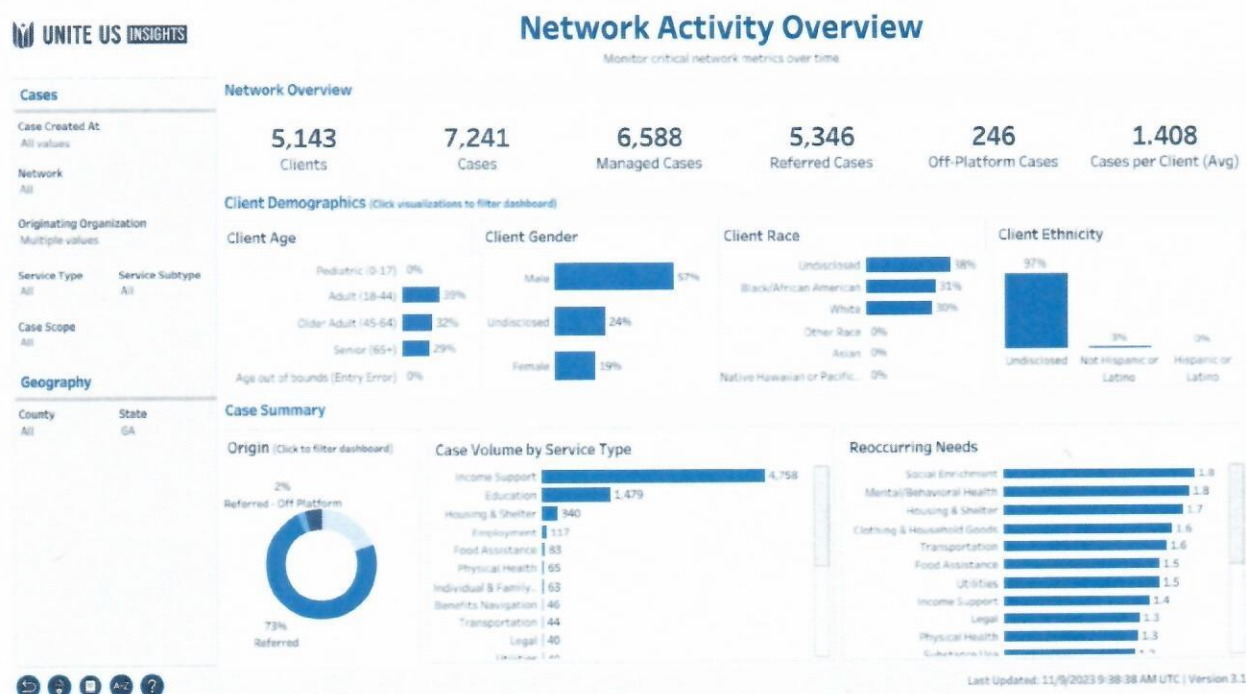
**Grant Program:**

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$747,464)
  - We are in partnership with Kennesaw State University AMES Center to implement the grant. The latest data was transmitted to the VA on November 6, 2023.
  - Calandra Ferguson provided the outreach and training data reports, and we transmitted them to the VA on November 6, 2023.
  - Calandra Ferguson or Veda Brooks will report all the outreach and training events regarding Suicide Prevention under the Fox Grant.
  - The SSG Fox Grant Year 2 Kickoff meeting with the AMES Center at Kennesaw State University was conducted on November 8, 2023, to discuss the plan for the coming year.



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- The end of year FER/FFR reports are due January 15, 2023.
- **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 November 9, 2023, we have 265,973 veterans in the system. We have submitted 956 community partners and 313 healthcare partners for inclusion to the platform since August 2022.
  - Our Warner Robins GDVS office is ranked #6 with 3826 Unite Us referrals received in the entire national network.
  - 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 first quarterly reports received on October 23, 2023, and both agencies are in compliance with grant guidelines.

**Events:**

- Participated in Leadership Institute's visit to the GA Veterans War Home and Cemetery in Milledgeville on October 20, 2023. The presentations and tours by Russell, Linda and Ernie were outstanding.
- The team attended the 2023 Veteran's Day Ceremony at the Capital on November 6, 2023.
- Attended VBA/OTED Virtual Veteran's Day Symposium on 11/9/2023 from 1300-1500. The VA would not provide slides but, the following subject matter was discussed:
  - VA History <https://department.va.gov/history/>
  - VA Disability Compensation claims <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file/>
  - Special Claims <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/special-claims/>
  - VA Pension <https://www.va.gov/pension/>
  - Fiduciary Program <https://www.benefits.va.gov/fiduciary/index.asp>
  - VA Education <https://www.va.gov/education/>
  - VA Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E), <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/>
  - Home Loans, <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/>
  - VA Life Insurance, <https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/>
  - VALI FAQ Document: [https://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/docs/VALI Information 10 13 2021.pdf](https://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/docs/VALI%20Information%2010%2013%202021.pdf)
  - Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance – Chapter 35, <https://www.va.gov/education/survivor-dependent-benefits/>
  - Home Loans Surviving Spouse, <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/surviving-spouse/>
  - Burial benefits, visit <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/>
  - Decision review process and how to file, <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/>
  - Accredited representatives by visiting <https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/>
  - VA Office of the General Counsel list of accredited attorneys: <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>
  - Working with accredited representatives by visiting <http://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/>
  - Check the status of your claim by visiting [www.va/claim-or-appeal-status/](http://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status/)
  - VA health and benefits mobile app at [www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-and-benefits](http://www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-and-benefits)



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- New claims or claims for increased compensation go to [www.va.gov/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/](http://www.va.gov/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/)
- For claims for conditions denied in the past go to [www.va.gov/decision-reviews/supplemental-claim/](http://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/supplemental-claim/)
- VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation go to [www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/](http://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/)
- Family member benefits go to [www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/](http://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/)
- Connect with a Vet Center online at [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov) , for questions call [Edward.McEvoy@va.gov](mailto:Edward.McEvoy@va.gov)
- PACT Act benefits now at [www.va.gov/PACT](http://www.va.gov/PACT)
- VA Healthcare by visiting <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction> or by calling 877-222-8387, [Frank.Wijngaarde@va.gov](mailto:Frank.Wijngaarde@va.gov)

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

**State Veterans Homes**

**State Veterans Homes Census (Through November 3, 2023) +**

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	95	107	202
Service Connected *	26	37	63
Total Patients	121	144	265
Last Month			
Regular Patients	94	111	205
Service Connected *	25	36	61
Total Patients	119	147	266

\* 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 October 14, 2023, through November 3, 2023.

Construction projects continue at the Georgia War Veterans Home's campus. New projects, including paving and renovations to the Wood Building have started.

The Homes are COVID-19 free.

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The GVVH will host a Veterans Day ceremony on November 10, 2023, at 11:00 am.

**State Veterans Cemeteries**

**Burial Statistics (through November 3, 2023)+**

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,353	2,372	19
Milledgeville	5,218	5,236	18
Total	7,571	7,608	37

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from October 13, 2023, through November 3, 2023.

**Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville**

Will host a Wreaths Across America ceremony on December 16, 2023. Everyone is invited to attend.

**Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville**

Construction on Phase 4a expansion started this week. This includes two new columbaria adding 640 additional niches.

Will host a Wreaths Across America ceremony on December 16, 2023. Everyone is invited to attend. Milledgeville is currently 500 wreaths short. Donations can be made.

**Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer**

On Thursday, October 26, 2023, Kerry Dyer attended the Annual Fleet Managers Conference at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, GA.

On Friday, October 27, 2023, Kerry Dyer processed a Resignation Packet for the August VAMC Field Service Office. He also spoke to Rick White, Director & Chairman of the Board for the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame regarding flag display for the Ceremony. Later that day Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Demers, Camala Ball, Kirsten Dennis, and Shareka Monday-Robinson met with SAO to discuss the Budget Projections and Procurement Purchase Orders for the first Quarter.

On Monday October 30, 2023, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director's Meeting. He also spoke to Leslie Davis, State Properties Leasing Specialist, regarding the relocation of the LaGrange Field Office.



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Later that day he spoke with Rober Orange, DOAS Accountant, regarding the way ahead for the Department's Capital Assets.

On Tuesday, October 31, 2023, Kerry Dyer posted the Cobb Multi-Specialty Clinic vacancy externally and internally. Later that day he updated the Department Alpha Roster and Promotion Roster in preparation for distribution to the Senior Leadership. He also, along with Jerry, Will and Mark, inventoried and organized the Department's Surplus items.

On Wednesday, November 1, 2023, Kerry Dyer submitted the monthly Fleet Managers Report to DOAS, Fleet Management. Later that day he emailed Ken Childre 9 potential candidates for his Cobb Multi-Specialty Clinic vacancy.

On Thursday, November 2, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with John McCord, GBA Project Director, and Kaiyana, Classic Design Services/CV Fine Arts Service Manager, met to discuss the relocation of the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Plaques. He also met with Natasha Simoes, Access Project Manager, to discuss the DD214 Change Order.

On Friday, November 3, 2023, Kerry Dyer traveled to Columbus, GA to assist with the flag and table displays for the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony & Banquet.

On Saturday, November 3, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with Mark Demers, Shareka Monday-Robinson, Julie Hammond, Raven Holstick, Irene Mackson, and Belinda Boldoe attended the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony & Banquet.

On Monday, November 6, 2023, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director's Meeting. Later that day he provided opening remarks for Governor Kemp's Veterans Day Ceremony.

On Tuesday, November 7, 2023, Kerry Dyer registered the Augusta VAMC Office Manager for the Sexual Harassment Training for Managers Course. Later that day he sent Linda Lavender a potential candidate for the Cemetery Tech 1 vacancy. He also attended the P-Card training, along with Mark Demers and Irene Mackson.

On Wednesday, November 8, 2023, Kerry Dyer processed Senior Veterans Field Service Officer Carol Crawford's retirement packet. Later that day he virtually attended the Fox Grant Year 2 Kick-Off meeting.

On Thursday, November 9, 2023, Kerry Dyer along with Leslie Davis, State Properties Specialist, conducted a site visit at the West Georgia Technical College in LaGrange, Georgia.

Mr. Dyer was the guest speaker at a Veterans Day event for the McDonough American Legion Post 516. The event took place in Locust Grove.

**Thursday, November 16, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from October 16, 2023- November 9, 2023.

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Augusta-VAMC	Office Mgr(VFSO2)	Resign	Wanda Brown	10/31/23
Milledgeville	Cemetery Tech 1	New Hire	Michael Taylor	11/01/23
Milledgeville	Cemetery Tech 1	New Hire	Joshua McDade	11/01/23
Milledgeville	Cemetery Tech 1	New hire	Zachery Clearwater	11/01/23

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

**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 1,824 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	394
Approved Training Establishments	1,430
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	21,278

\* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, October 2023.

**Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications**

**INFORMATION OUTREACH**

**Division Updates**

1. GDVS Newsletter – PID published a monthly newsletter in October. The e-newsletter features top stories from the month and encourages readers to get the full issue at



<https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>. The October edition highlighted the SSG Fox Forum held on October 5 at the state capitol, great VSO kudos received from the South Georgia team, the opening of a new production kitchen in Milledgeville and resident activities, and spotlighted the Employee of the Quarter and a North Georgia VSO.

2. TCSG/Unite Us – External Affairs and Communications continued working with TCSG and Unite Us partners on an upcoming narrative and video piece to promote the network of resources in place across the state for veterans and their families. After identifying and connecting a successful veteran, we assisted a VSO with questions, provided information to our partners, and coordinated a film crew visit at GDVS Central Office to highlight the great work GDVS, TCSG, and WorkSource can achieve together using Unite Us.
3. Women Veterans Symposium – assisted Women, Minority, and Diverse Veterans Coordinator Veda Brooks with an information fair at Saint Philip AME Church in Atlanta. External Affairs helped create new materials for outreach and suicide prevention awareness which were first distributed at the event and helped guide veterans to resources while in attendance. Veterans received help with benefits questions, finding women veteran resources, and were able to get information on suicide prevention.
4. Veterans Benefits Outreach
  - a. Veterans Day activities – updated the GDVS website with upcoming events across the state for Veterans Day, including parades, outreach events, and celebrations. We have continued to add events in different areas of the state.
    - i. National Veterans and Military Families Month – celebrated the beginning of Veterans and Military Families month and getting ready for Veterans Day.
  - b. Veterans Small Business Week – shared information from the Small Business Administration on an event at the GA VECTR Center to kickoff national veteran small business week and promote an in-person learning opportunity.
  - c. Million Veterans Program – this VA backed program is nearing the one million participant mark, but are continuing to expand their avenues of research based on the data from participants. GDVS promoted the program to encourage veterans to help others and get closer to the one million mark.

**Public Information Division Contacts** *(Since December 9, 2022)*

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 603
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 930
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 160

**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 30,010  
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 23,990

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 359

Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 291

**VETERANS DAY AT THE CAPITOL:**





**OLD BUSINESS:**

We are still working on the situation for Mr. Mendez's friend who needs dental services for an in-service accident.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Commissioner Ross announced that GDVS participated in various Veterans Day Activities.

Commissioner Ross announced a meeting with the newly formed Veteran Action Group that met on November 15 at TCSG. Representatives from the VA, VISN 7, Community Engagement Board, Senator Ossoff's office, the Georgia House and Senate and GDVS were present. They identified the top issues facing veterans in Georgia and worked on narrowing down the issues the group can collaborate on to benefit our veterans.

Ms. Swan visited the Augusta War Home and spent time with some of the veterans there.

The transition at the Milledgeville Home is going well and morale is great among the staff and patients. STGi is very involved in the activities at the Home.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

We have taken care of our legislative submissions, which include clarifying language on small business tax and the homestead exemption for veterans. We are also trying to get inflationary increases for the homes and raises for our cemetery workers.

We have been given land in Waycross for a Veterans Home. We will have to match 35% of the cost from state funds and fundraising, which is about \$25 million. There are nursing programs in nearby schools that could be used to staff a new home.

Mr. Hanley noted that we need to invite the Veterans Service Foundation members to these monthly meetings.

The December 19 Board meeting was scheduled. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

**Thursday, November 16, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

Ms. Swan made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion, which passed. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:27 p.m.

SIGNED:



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Shawn Hanley, Chair

ATTEST:



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Joshua Kopsie, Secretary