



**Georgia Department
of Veterans Service**

Cultivating community connections
– empowering Georgia’s veterans
and their families to flourish.

October 2022

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICE
AWARDED VA SSG FOX SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT**



The GDVS recently received a grant of \$747,464 from VA to support its mission through the [Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon](#)

[Fox Suicide Prevention Grant](#)

[Program](#) (SSG Fox SPGP), a three-year program that provides funding to community-based organizations with innovative ideas for preventing veteran suicide.

With its SSG Fox SPGP award, the GDVS will work with the Center for the Advancement of Military and Emergency Services (AMES) Research at Kennesaw State University to identify emerging trends of suicidality in veterans in Georgia.

Together, the GDVS and AMES will develop and deliver scalable veteran and family-appropriate suicide prevention programming for both in-person and virtual delivery. The AMES team will also develop predictive analytic models of areas of emerging concern and improve

equity in access to services for service members, veterans, and their families.

“I look forward to seeing the Georgia Department of Veterans Service and Kennesaw State University Center for AMES Research use these funds to better serve those who have served our nation,” said Governor Brian Kemp. “We all owe a great debt to the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. In Georgia, we will continue working to ensure our brave veterans receive the help they need when facing uncertainty, despair, and other challenges.”

The SSG Fox SPGP is a pilot, community-based grant program that provides financial assistance to eligible entities to provide or coordinate providing suicide prevention services to eligible veterans and their families.

“This is an incredible opportunity to address and enhance equity in care for Georgia’s veterans. As we look toward the future, the SSG Fox SPGP grant will enable us to identify our areas of most urgent need and enhance our long-term ability to address behavioral

health for veterans and families,” said Dr. Brian Moore, Director of the AMES Center.

“The AMES Research Center is honored to partner with the GDVS on this timely and much needed work.”

Suicide in veterans is a complex problem, which requires coordinated, evidence-based solutions beyond the traditional medical model of prevention. The GDVS joined the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide in Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families in 2020 with the support of Governor Kemp.

“One suicide is too many. It takes all of us working together to help our veterans receive the care and support they need and earned through their service to our nation,” said GDVS Commissioner Patricia Ross.

“We look forward to making a difference in the lives of our veterans and reducing veteran suicides across Georgia.”



SERVING ALL WHO SERVED: GDVS AT ATLANTA PRIDE



With banners reading “Serving **All** Who Served,” Georgia Department of Veterans Service representatives greeted hundreds of people at the Atlanta Pride Festival during the annual two-day event in early October.

GDVS coordinators for Suicide Prevention and Outreach, Women and Diversity, as well as the Governor’s Task Force to Prevent Suicide in Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families, took the lead on letting Atlanta’s veteran LGBTQ+ community know the kinds of help available to them.



“We are excited to meet and serve Georgia’s veteran LGBTQ+ community. They do not always know they qualify for veterans benefits or know there’s a large network of resources ready and waiting to assist them,” said Calandra Ferguson, GDVS Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator. “Our goal is to proactively attend events and find those veterans who might not know they qualify for help.”

The festival saw approximately 350,000 attendees over two days and the GDVS was able to provide information on veterans benefits and answer questions to over 500 servicemembers, veterans, and their families.



Information was distributed to veterans representing all eras and branches of the military, including compensation, pension, suicide prevention, state veteran homes, women’s healthcare, and more. Many veterans the team met at the festival didn’t know they were even able to receive benefits from VA.

At the end of the event, it was the tears of one veteran who “cried and thanked us for what were doing in the community to confirm that we were in the right place at the right time,” said Ferguson. “We will always be here to help all of our veterans.”

NEW GDVS OFFICES

Veterans in Cobb and Pike counties can now receive veterans benefits assistance in two new locations!

The GDVS recently opened offices in Chattahoochee Tech’s new [Marietta VECTR Center](#) and the [Zebulon VA Clinic](#).

Interested in making an appointment? Call [770-528-4920](tel:770-528-4920) for Marietta or [770-567-7500](tel:770-567-7500) for Zebulon.

VETERANS DAY IN GEORGIA

Georgia’s veterans and their families are invited to join Governor Brian Kemp and the GDVS for the **68th annual Veterans Day in Georgia** proclamation signing ceremony at the State Capitol on Nov. 9th at 1 p.m.

GET TO KNOW YOUR VSO



A sincere desire to help others is what motivates GDVS veteran service officer Raven Holstick. She also serves as the state’s American Legion service officer.

Prior to joining the GDVS, Holstick served in the United States Army as a chaplain assistant and helped ensured soldiers had their religious needs met.

During her time in the Army, she was able to see many different parts of the world when stationed in Germany and Kuwait. Duty stations in Fort Carson and Fort Jackson also expanded her view of the opportunities to travel and explore the United States after growing up in Alabama.

Holstick separated from the Army in 2019, but has embraced her new career as a veterans service officer. “If I can make an impact on a veteran’s life with filing a claim, representing a veteran as their appeals officer, or just being that listening ear, I feel as though my passion for serving people is complete,” said Holstick. “Working for the GDVS, I feel like I’m able to do that and more by helping thousands of veterans.”

Her motivation to help is part of why she exhausts all options to find solutions to problems and why resilience is one of her greatest strengths. Holstick is adamant in making sure veterans feel seen, heard, and appreciated when visiting her for help.

She makes sure veterans leave her office with a smile on their face.

“I believe that bad days will come, but won’t last forever,” said Holstick. “It is how you handle those moments that matter the most.”