



# Olmsted County

## Veterans Advocate Newsletter

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April 2025

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## CVSO Office Updates

**NOTE: One quick update from our office - all Veteran Service Officers will be attending Annual Spring Training in Mankato from Monday April 28<sup>th</sup> through Wednesday April 30<sup>th</sup>. We will have our computers with us, but we will be in dedicated training for much of those days. Please be patient and we will get back to you regarding any questions you may have during that time frame.**

Happy APRIL Olmsted County Veterans, family members, community partners, etc! Thank you for being diligent readers of the OCVS newsletter. We are continuing to put helpful educational materials in here each month. If there's something you'd like to see more or less of, please feel free to reach out to Karen or myself!

### Apply for a Disability Rating

This guide will help you submit a disability claim and possibly obtain a disability rating. A disability rating could be between 0%–100%. A disability rating may give you access to certain VA benefits, such as compensation and ongoing health care.

#### A Checklist to Help You File Your Disability Claim and Get Your Disability Rating

##### Step 1: Preparation

- Learn about different **types of claims** you can file.
- **Collect the necessary documents** to file a claim:
  - **Discharge papers** (DD214 Member 4 or equivalent).
  - **Military medical records**.
  - **VA medical records and hospital reports** related to your disability.
  - **Private medical records and hospital reports** related to your disability.

##### Step 2: Application

- Apply by submitting all documents in **one** of these ways:
  - **Online:** Visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>.
  - **In-person:** Complete a claim form at a VA Regional Office or make an appointment with your County Veteran Service Officer.

##### Step 3: Review and Decision

- Track your claim status online at: <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status>.
- **Provide additional information or documentation** if requested by the VA.
- **Attend a VA medical examination** if requested.

##### Step 4: Next Steps

- If approved, take the following steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:
  - **Review your award letter** to understand your rating.
  - **Review the VA benefits handbook** that is sent to you.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

##### Get Help

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a **VA-accredited representative (Veterans Service Officer)** or a claims representative **at a VA Regional Office**.

##### Where Can I Find My Discharge Papers?

To find out more about how to get your military service records, visit: <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records>.

##### Can VA Help Obtain Private Medical Records?

Yes, you can obtain records from private doctors or hospitals yourself, or you

can sign a **release authorization** for VA to obtain these records for you.

### **How Long Will It Take?**

The length of time to process a claim depends on:

- The type of claim filed.
- How many injuries and disabilities you claimed.
- How long it takes for VA to gather supporting evidence.
- How many claims were submitted when yours was filed

### **Information you'll need to know to file your claim and get your disability rating:**

#### **Am I eligible for benefits?**

You may be eligible for VA Disability benefits if VA finds you have a disease, injury, or condition that resulted from service or was made worse during your military service.

Common conditions include:

- Hearing loss and/or ringing in the ears
- Knee, ankle, or back pain/injury
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, depression, ETC.
- Traumatic brain injury
- Respiratory Disease
- Ulcers
- Loss of range of motion
- Cancer (due to hazardous exposures)

*Note: If you believe you have an illness or injury that you believe was caused or made worse by your military service, you should file a claim with the VA.*

#### **Who can file a disability claim?**

- Veterans
- Service members preparing to separate from the military
- Surviving family members seeking benefits owed to Veterans on pending claims

#### **Who can help me?**

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA Accredited Representative (Veteran Services Officer - CVSO/VSO) or a claims representative at your VA Regional Office.

### **OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:**

Why is receiving a disability rating important?

If you have a service-connected disability, you may be entitled to additional VA benefits and services, including:

- Disability compensation
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- Level of VA health care coverage
- Increased preference in federal hiring
- VA Home Loan fee exemption
- Specially Adapted Housing Assistance

**Note: You can apply for a disability rating anytime throughout your life.**

How does my disability rating affect my family?

If you are eligible for disability compensation of 30% or higher, you may be paid additional amounts if you have a spouse, dependent child(ren), or dependent parents, and they may be eligible for additional benefits.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Please reach out to us with any questions regarding the benefits process, any of our staff will help answer your questions and guide you through the next steps. You can either call (507) 328-6355 or send an email to [ocvs@olmstedcounty.gov](mailto:ocvs@olmstedcounty.gov)**



Tiffany Canfield  
Veteran Services Manager

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## Veteran Service Office Snapshot

### February 2025

Total claims submitted to VA:

- Compensation: 56
- VA Healthcare: 9
- DIC: 0
- Burial: 4
- Survivor's Pension: 0
- CHAMPVA: 1
- Records Request: 2
- Special Monthly Pension: 1

Points of contact with veterans (office visits, incoming mail, phone calls returned, emails returned, etc.): 566

Veterans in office: 106

Outreach visits: 1

Total phone calls: 292

Average number of calls per day: 10

Average call length: 3 minutes and 21 seconds

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## Women Veterans Spotlight



April Mantra:

I am Thriving: I reap the benefits of a life spent in health, joy, and contribution.

### Happy April, Sisters!

I hope this message finds you well as we step into a fresh new month. How are you doing? Really—how *are* you? Life can be a whirlwind, and I just want to remind you that you're not alone. I hope you're taking a moment to breathe, to check in with yourself, and to prioritize *you*.

Back in January, my dear friend Allyson shared some great advice on building small habits that lead to big life changes. This month, I want to ask—how are you managing your stress? Are you giving yourself the grace to pause and reset? What small habits are you incorporating into your daily routine to help ease the weight of the never-ending to-do list?

If you need some ideas, here are a few simple but powerful ways to manage stress:

- **Set Micro-Goals** – Instead of tackling everything at once, focus on just *one* small, manageable task at a time. Progress, not perfection.
- **Move Your Body** – Whether it's a walk outside, a quick stretch, or a full workout, movement is a natural stress reliever.
- **Breathe with Intention** – Try deep breathing exercises or mindfulness meditation, even if it's just for a minute or two between tasks.
- **Unplug When You Can** – Step away from social media, turn off the noise, and give yourself the gift of quiet.
- **Find Your Support System** – You don't have to do it all alone. Reach out to those who uplift and encourage you.

Speaking of support—let's check in on one another. Reach out to a sister this month. Send a text, grab a coffee, or take a walk together. Remember, the "*it takes a village*" mindset doesn't just apply to moms—it applies to *all* of us. We all need connection, understanding, and those moments of genuine support.

Let's lift each other up and make this a month of renewal, connection, and self-care. You *deserve* it.

**With love and strength,**

-Tiffany

"You can't raise the bar without raising a little hell"- so let's raise some hell, shall we ladies??

## Women Veterans Gala

Join us for a **FREE** event to celebrate, laugh, learn, and enjoy the company of other women veterans in Southeast Minnesota!

### Event Details:

When: Friday, May 2, 2025

Where: Rochester Golf and Country Club  
3100 Country Club Road SW, Rochester, MN

### Schedule:

- 3-5 PM Resource Booths
- 5-6 PM Appetizers, Music, Mingling
- 6 PM Dinner
- 7 PM Guest Speaker: **Kelley Adelman, M.Div, CT**,  
American Legion Department of MN Chaplain

### What to Expect:

- Semi-Formal Gala Attire
- Connection
- Live Music
- Swag Bags
- No Fundraising or Solicitation

### Accessibility & Contact Information:

If you require an escort or caregiver, please contact: **Jennifer Shumaker** at **507-701-6307** or email [jennifer.shumaker@state.mn.us](mailto:jennifer.shumaker@state.mn.us)

Hosted by **DAV Chapter 28 and AUX Unit 28**

## Veterans Day on the Hill 2025

**When: April 9th, 2025**

### Event Details:

\*Presented by DAV of MN

- **Free Veterans and Supporters Lunch**  
*Location:* One block from the Capitol at **600 Cedar Street, St. Paul**  
*Doors Open:* 10:00 AM (Coffee Provided)

- **Doors Open:** 10:00 AM (Coffee Provided)
- **Lunch Provided**
- **Presentation:** 12:00 PM

### Veterans March to the Rally

- **Time:** 1:00 PM
- **Route:** Short walk from the Armory to the **State Veterans Service Building (20 West 12th St., St. Paul)**

### Rally in the Rotunda:

**\*Presented by CTF (Commanders Task Force) and MACVSO (MN Association of County Veteran Service Officers)**

- **Time:** 1:30 - 2:30 PM

### Topics Include:

- Passing a clean **Veterans Omnibus Bill**
- Increasing the amount of the **Property Tax Value Exclusion**
- Reduced-cost **Hunting and Fishing Licenses for Disabled Veterans**

### Meet Your Lawmaker!

A **minibus** will run from the Armory to the **Centennial and Senate Office Buildings** between **10:00 - 11:30 AM**.

*\* Make your appointments to see your lawmakers!*

No membership in any organization is required. ALL supporters are welcome!!

For questions, contact: [trent@davmn.org](mailto:trent@davmn.org)

### Karen's Korner

I had heard rumors about pages being removed from the Arlington National Cemetery website, so I decided to check it out for myself. I went to their official website: [www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/#/](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/#/) clicked on Media / News and found the following paragraph:

Website Content Update

**Date: March 19, 2025**

Arlington National Cemetery is updating its website and Education Program content to comply with executive orders issued by the President and Department of Defense instructions.

We want to clarify that no service members have been permanently removed from the "Notable Graves" section of our website. These pages honor historically significant individuals with accuracy, recognizing their service and sacrifice.

Profiles previously categorized under "African American History," "Hispanic American History," and "Women's History" can now be found in broader categories such as:

- **Prominent Military Figures**
- **Politics and Government**
- **Science, Technology, and Engineering**

These changes are intended to highlight individuals based on their historical contributions to our nation.

For more information, visit our website or contact us for assistance.

**\*\*I did a search for the three sites mentioned and noticed that only one site, African American History, had been restored.**

SEMCCAC is proud to announce a NEW service, honoring all those who serve. SEMCCAC recently added a new bus to their fleet and would like to offer FREE rides to **mobility challenged** disabled veterans.

The bus will be operating out of Stewartville but will be covering their five county service area.

We asked Bill Spitzer, SEMCCAC's Director of Transportation, a few questions about their program and here are his replies:

- How long will Rolling Hills be offering free transportation? **There is no end date planned.**
- How do veterans schedule a ride? **Call the dispatch center (507) 634-4340**
- Where will you transport veterans to (examples: medical appointments, C&P exams, the grocery store, etc...)? **Any of those**
- What do you need in order to prove veteran status? **A VA/government issued ID (such as a Veterans Health Identification Card, military ID card, driver's license denoting veteran status or DD214)**
- When you say 'disabled', do you mean physically or mentally as well? **This service would be for 'mobility challenged' veterans. At this time we do not have the capacity to offer to all veterans.**

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## The ParkRx Movement

### Reconnect with Nature: The ParkRx Movement

The **ParkRx** movement is a growing initiative that encourages healthcare providers to prescribe time in nature as a way to improve physical and mental health. Backed by research, ParkRx promotes the healing power of the outdoors, helping individuals reduce stress, boost moods, increase physical activity, and enhance overall well-being.

Through partnerships with healthcare professionals, parks, and community organizations, **ParkRx America** makes it easier for individuals to find and enjoy green spaces that support their health. Whether it's a walk in the woods, a moment of mindfulness by the water, or simply breathing in fresh air, spending time in nature is a simple yet powerful way to enhance wellness.

This month, take a moment to step outside, explore a local park, and embrace the restorative benefits of nature. Your health will thank you!

Learn more at [PRA - Nature Prescribed](#)

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## Wounded Warrior Date Night

The Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) is hosting a **Date Night: Arcade and Axe Throwing** event aimed at providing veterans and their partners with an enjoyable evening of activities. This event offers a unique opportunity to engage in axe throwing and arcade games, fostering camaraderie among participants in a relaxed and entertaining environment.

When: Thursday, April 17, 2025

Time: 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Where: Rochester, MN\*\*

\*\*For more information and to register, please visit the event page:

[Overview : Date Night - Arcade and Axe Throwing : Blackthorn Events](#)

**Note: Veterans must be Post 9/11. Veterans and family support members must be registered alumni of the Wounded Warrior Project.**

**Travel and lodging will NOT be covered for this event.**

Should you have questions, please contact John Wisniewski at:

[jwisniewski@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:jwisniewski@woundedwarriorproject.org)

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## Unlock the Power of VA Home Loans

Are you a veteran or service member curious about VA financing? Want to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits and process? Join us for an exclusive **VA Home Loan Information Session**, presented by **Prosperity Home Mortgage!**

Discover how this valuable program can help you achieve homeownership with ease. Learn about the key advantages, eligibility requirements, and why a VA loan could be the perfect fit for you.

**Date:** Wednesday, May 14th

**Time:** 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**Location:** Veteran Services Main Office  
2100 Campus Drive SE  
Rochester, MN 55904

Spots are limited - Reserve yours today! Contact **Karen Applen at 507-328-6355** to secure your place.

Don't miss this opportunity to empower your home-buying journey with expert insights!

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## Staying Independent and Connected

With a little help, you can be independent as you age. For many Veterans, growing older may mean having a harder time getting around, needing more support in your daily life and requiring more frequent trips to the doctor for care. These changes might affect what makes you happy, like being independent, exercising, traveling and spending time with family.

This is why it is important to take advantage of VA resources so you can age in place in your home. In recognition of Senior Independence Awareness Month this February, VA is highlighting a variety of resources to help senior Veterans live independently and live well.

### Resources for older Veterans

VA offers a variety of resources and programs for older Veterans that can help you build a routine and support system to remain independent.

- [Veteran Decision Aid](#) provides a checklist to help you narrow down which VA resources and what kind of care is best for you, with help creating a personalized health plan by and for Veterans like you.
- [Veteran Directed Care](#) allows you and your caregiver(s) to create an individualized plan for assistance and personal care that fits your needs and lifestyle. Through this program, you can get help developing a spending and care plan to help you live independently in your own home or community.
- [Palliative Care](#) focuses on keeping symptoms in check so that you can carry out day-to-day activities. Palliative care aims to improve your overall quality of life, whether that's physical, mental or emotional well-being.
- [Adult Day Health Care](#) is a VA support program designed to help with personal care tasks while also providing opportunities for you to socialize with others and engage in your community. These activities are flexible and can be adjusted to best fit your schedule and needs.

### Community resources

VHA also provides a wide range of community resources online, over the phone and in-person to help you find support and address specific needs:

- [Benefits Checkup](#) is a free service that helps you identify what programs and care you qualify for.
- [Elder Care Locator](#) and [Family Care Navigator](#) provides resources for older adults and their families as well as state-specific resources on legal issues, benefits, living arrangements and education for caregivers.
- The [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) promotes transportation options for older adults and caregivers, allowing more

transportation options for older adults and caregivers, allowing more flexibility and freedom for senior Veterans.

Speak with your primary care provider to find out if you are eligible for geriatric and extended care services. For more information on VA services for older Veterans, visit the [VA Geriatrics and Extended Care](#) website.

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## TRICARE / MHS GENESIS

On April 1, 2025 the [TRICARE Online Patient Portal](#) will no longer be available. The Department of Defense's new electronic health record—[MHS GENESIS](#)—has replaced the TOL Patient Portal. As part of the transition, the DOD is decommissioning the TOL Patient Portal.

If you want to keep a copy of your legacy health records for personal use, you must download them from the TOL Patient Portal before April 1st.

"All military hospitals and clinics have transitioned to MHS GENESIS. We encourage you to take these important steps to save your personal health records before the TOL Patient Portal decommissions," said Rear Adm. Tracy Farrill, Principal Deputy, Assistant Director for Health Care Administration, and Military Health System EHR Functional Champion at the Defense Health Agency. "Your medical history is a valuable resource for managing your health, and saving your records now ensures you have access if you need it."

### What will happen to my records?

- **Provider access:** Your provider will continue to have access to your complete health records.
- **Personal access:** You can use the steps below to download your legacy records for personal use before April 1. You can also request a physical copy from your [military hospital or clinic](#)'s records management office. To do this, you'll need to complete a request form, in person, and then return at a later designated time to pick up the records. Beginning April 1, if you want your legacy health records, you'll have to follow this process.

### What should I do now?

To keep copies of your legacy health records, follow these [instructions](#):

1. **Visit** [www.TRICAREOnline.com](http://www.TRICAREOnline.com).
2. **Log in:** Sign in using your DS Logon, CAC, or DFAS myPay credentials. If you don't have a DS Logon, you'll need to create one.
3. **Access:** On the TOL homepage, click the blue "Health Record" button to view your personal health data.
4. **Find data:** Select "Download My Data." You'll see several data categories.
5. **Customize:** Choose the person, data types, date range, and format for the records you want to download.
6. **Download:** You can choose to download your records in portable document format (.pdf) or as a (.xml) continuity of care document. The CCD format allows you to share your data with family, caregivers, providers, and healthcare systems, or to document data in your preferred personal health record.
7. **Save:** After downloading, you can either open the file or save it securely for future use. You can also print your records and store them in a safe place.

### Important details

- Your records won't transfer to MHS GENESIS once TOL decommissions.
- Your TOL health records only reflect periods of time when your military hospital or clinic was using TOL. **Note:** If you moved from one duty station to another, and one military hospital or clinic used TOL and the other used MHS GENESIS, your records in MHS GENESIS may have gaps. You'll find these "gap" records in the TOL Patient Portal. Be sure to download them.
- You can only download your records from the past 30 years, from the date you log in to TOL.
- Protect your health information. When you download or print your personal health information, it becomes your responsibility to keep it

safe. Use secure options. Avoid saving personal data on unsecure devices or platforms.

It's also important to know that if you're planning to file a claim with the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), this decommissioning won't affect your ability to do so. Providers will still have access to your complete health records.

### **Can I see my children's health records?**

Yes. You can view all available health data for your children under the age of 12. For children aged 12 to 17, you may view COVID-19, coronavirus, and flu test results, as well as allergies, vitals, and immunization data.

Due to state privacy laws, there are limits to what health data you can view online for your children aged 12 to 17. You can request printed results from your child's clinic or provider.

### **Don't wait—take action**

**Remember:** The TOL Patient Portal will only be available until April 1. Take the time now to download and store your health records to ensure you can easily access them if needed.

To get started or learn more, visit the [TOL Patient Portal](#).

*Would you like the latest TRICARE news sent to you by email? Visit [TRICARE Subscriptions](#), and create your personalized profile to get benefit updates, news, and more.*

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## **Honor Bound Veterans Group**

Honor Bound Veterans (HBV) is a non-profit focused on building a community of local veterans through events and opportunities to engage veterans with the intention of eliminating the isolation that is pervasive after leaving military service. While other service organizations focus on doing pushups to combat veteran suicide, we at HBV would rather engage veterans in the brotherhood that they've once enjoyed. Throughout the year, HBV offers monthly lunches to get local veterans together over tacos and create new friendships and connections. Beyond the monthly lunches, we offer opportunities to join veteran sporting teams and engage in what every infantryman misses most from their military service... Ruck Marching!

A common theme we've heard from GWOT veterans is the desire for a non-membership organization with no annual dues or commitments. HBV is a non-membership organization and the only requirement to participate is that you are a veteran. Our Mission is to combat veteran isolation and suicide by creating a robust community of US military veterans through events and activities and arranging human services to those in need.

Honor Bound Veterans was founded in March 2024 by Bryan Ehni, Chelse Ehni, and Josh Gerber. Bryan and Josh are both military veterans having served in the Army and Marine Corps respectively. All co-founders have a passion for helping vets. More importantly, HBV has a solid base of volunteers who continue to drive our mission forward. Roderic Haworth is the Director of Outreach and Matthew Guenther is the Director of Marketing. Both men contribute tremendously to the organization by bringing their passion for helping veterans and perspective on how HBV can have the greatest impact in our community.

If you are interested in connecting with Honor Bound Veterans, to attend events, donate or volunteer please send an email to [honorboundveteransmn@gmail.com](mailto:honorboundveteransmn@gmail.com).

Honor Bound - Taco Tuesday

Come together with other Veterans to share lunch and camaraderie! Each person pays for their own lunch.

When: 1st Tuesday of the month

Time: 11:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Where: Tap House West End

2365 Commerce Drive NW  
Rochester, MN 55901



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## Turkey Hunt

### Are you a veteran from southeast MN who loves to hunt turkey?

The Deer Creek Longspurs Chapter of the NWTf will be hosting a mentored **veteran turkey hunt** from May 1-4, 2025. The hunt will be based out of Racine, MN. If you would like an application form for the hunt, please contact Matt at 507-951-5614 or Will at 507-421-4424. We will select 8 lucky hunters for this year!

More information can be found on our Facebook page as well: NWTf – Deercreek Longspurs

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## St. Paul Vet's Center

### Who We Are

Vet Centers help veterans and their families build meaningful connections and tools for success in military and civilian life.

### Our Services

- **Counseling:** Vet Centers provide individual, group, couples and family counseling to talk through problems, brainstorm solutions, discuss what resources are available, and work with you to create effective and practical plans for your personal growth.
- **Referrals:** Vet Centers provide medical, benefit, employment and other VA and community referral services to help you and your family navigate time-consuming tasks, like applying for VA benefits or finding a job.
- **Community Engagement:** Vet Centers help you connect with your community by working with local partners and using their resources to advocate for your needs. Ultimately, this allows them to create a greater support system for you and your family.

\*\*92% of those who use Vet Centers say their quality-of-life benefits from their services.

### Core Benefits

- **Welcoming Environment:** The Vet Center community treats you like family. They work hard to ensure that you feel respected, safe, relaxed and comfortable.
- **Community of Support:** Whether you come in for one-on-one counseling or to participate in a group session, Vet Centers allow you to form social connections, try new things, and build a support system with people who understand you and want to help you succeed.
- **Practical and Therapeutic Services:** At the Vet Center, one size does not fit all. From talk therapy to recreational activities, they work with you to identify your individual goals and find the right plan that meets them.

### Who We Serve

Services are provided to veterans and service members who served in combat operations, hostile areas, stateside deployments, or experienced military service-related trauma. They also provide support for families to assist in the growth and goals of the veteran or service member. Eligibility varies based on military experience, including National Guard, Reserves, and Coast Guard. The

...ing, experience, managing transition, family, resources, and more. Our goal is to qualify individuals rather than turn them away. If someone does not meet eligibility requirements, the Vet Center will help find other community resources that may be more suitable for that individual.

#### Our Priorities

- **Safe and Confidential:** Vet Center records cannot be accessed by other VA or DoD offices, military units, or other community networks and providers without your permission or unless required to avert a life-threatening situation. You can be as open as you want - there's absolutely no judgement.
- **Guided by professionals who get it:** The Vet Centers highly trained counselors and team members are dedicated to seeing you through the challenges that come with managing life during and after the military. Most of them have also served, so they understand common veteran and military experiences.
- **No Cost. No Strings Attached:** Services are available to you at no cost, regardless of character of discharge, and without the need to enroll in VA health care or have a service-connected disability. Appointments are available to fit your schedule.

#### Contact Information:

Vet Center Call Center (available 24/7) 877-927-8387

Find a Vet Center: [www.va.gov/find-locations](http://www.va.gov/find-locations)

Can't make it to a Vet Center? Services are also offered through Mobile Vet Centers, virtual appointments, and other community locations that might be more convenient.

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### MN Assistance Council for Veterans

The mission of MN Assistance Council for Veterans, commonly known as MACV, is to end veteran homelessness in Minnesota.

MACV serves Minnesota veterans, and their families, who are either homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. All Veterans are welcome, wherever you are on your path, and they uphold the worth and dignity of all those who are involved with MACV.

The goal is to help you live as independently as you can by providing the services that you've earned. They offer services across Minnesota which include housing help, employment services, and legal assistance through their Vetlaw program. They also connect Veterans to other networks of local partner organizations who also help Veterans.

#### Housing Services:

MACV offers transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for homeless Veterans across Minnesota. Their Veteran housing program is designed to provide Veterans with holistic, housing-related assistance.

#### Employment Services:

MACV's Veteran employment and training services help Veterans prepare for their employment search, including resume building and job skill development, and connecting Veterans with full-time, living-wage jobs.

#### Legal Services:

MACV's Vetlaw program offers free Veteran legal aid and resources for all Minnesota Veterans. Legal services include representation, community legal clinics, referrals, and phone services regarding Minnesota law.

MACV works in [locations throughout Minnesota](#) serving Veterans in need.

- Minneapolis/St. Paul
- Duluth
- Mankato
- Moorhead

- St. Cloud
- Rochester

Outside of housing and office locations, case managers are stationed across Minnesota to provide local assistance for wherever you are located.

**Southern Minnesota MACV:** Mankato, MN

- Intake Line: 507-345-8258
- Fax: 612-200-9156

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### Red Carpet Welcome

#### **A letter from Patrick J. Kelly, FACHE, Director of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System**

"Thank you for serving, and welcome to the Minneapolis VA Health Care System! We are pleased that you have chosen us for your care. Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of Veterans like you by providing the excellent medical care you've earned.

As a newly enrolled veteran, we invite you to attend a 'Red Carpet Welcome' orientation. This orientation is offered on the 2nd Thursday of March, June, September and December at the Rochester VA Clinic. There is no need for an appointment; just come to the clinic and ask to be escorted to Room 102 at 1300. (Please look for the signs or ask how to find us at the front desk.)

**NOTE:** Red Carpet dates are now listed on the **NEW** Olmsted County Veteran Services website calendar.

The purpose of the orientation is to provide you with information regarding your VA health care benefits and health care services offered. We also will provide information to assist you in navigating the VA, both the building and the system.

We hope you will attend a 'Red Carpet Welcome' orientation during your first visit to the Rochester VA Clinic. If you can't make it during your first visit, please feel free to come during one of your future visits.

You've given your best in your service to our nation. Now, the Minneapolis VA Health Care System is here to serve you."



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### Camp Bliss Events

*2025 Camp Bliss Retreats for Veterans, Law Enforcement and People with Disabilities!*

We are thrilled to share some exciting news with you! We have been very successful with our legislative pursuits for funding of Veteran Retreats and Getaways at Camp Bliss. Exciting News!

- **We will not be charging a registration fees for Veteran getaways for the next two years, we have secured funding from the MDVA. For non-qualifying Veterans there will be a fee of \$100 per person to attend a getaway or retreat. If you have questions about the guidelines please call Lori at (320) 281-2016.**

- We will now be allowed to get reimbursement for Spouses, children, and active-duty service members!

You may come up to **two retreats per year!!!!** MDVA Calendar Year September 1, 2024 – August 30, 2025. We have added many exciting retreats due to this!! A complete list of 2024 Retreats and Getaways are listed below! \*\*Because there will not be a registration fee, **you will still be required to submit the appropriate documentation, DD214 (Member 4) and Driver's license or state ID.** If a spouse is attending and has a different last name, you will be required to show proof of marriage before you are considered "registered." Once you are, please commit fully to attending your retreat as there are limited spots for each one and if you do not show up, that is a Veteran's spot that you have eliminated

If a Retreat/Getaway says FILLED, please email or call Lori O. to be put on a waiting list: Register@campbliss.org or call 320-281-2016

*2025 Upcoming Camp Bliss Retreats.*

Female Veterans Getaway – May 2-4, 2025

- Register by April 4th

Veterans and Spouses Fishing Getaway - May 9-11, 2025

- Register by April 18th

Veterans Turkey Hunt Getaway – May 16-18, 2025

- Register by April 11th

Veterans and Family Getaway - June 6-8, 2025

- Register by May 2nd

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**Local Service Organization Meetings**

For a full list of local organizations and meetings, please click on the blue button.

Local Meetings



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**"To promote the interests and welfare of veterans, their dependents and survivors and to enhance their quality of life through counseling, claims assistance, education, advocacy and special projects."**

[Olmsted County Veteran Services](#)

2100 Campus Dr. SE, Suite 200  
Rochester, MN 55904  
507-328-6355

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**OLMSTED COUNTY  
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