
The Veteran Advocate

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE NATION'S OLDEST COMMUNITY-BASED NONPROFIT SERVING VETERANS | WINTER 2020/2021



A Year in Review



VETERANS 
OUTREACH CENTER Inc.

★ Serving Those Who Serve U.S. ★[®]



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello and Happy New Year!

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” - Unknown

As we reflect on 2020, it's easy to say what a tough year we all had. But that's not where I want to get stuck. And in fact, it's not even close to the whole story at VOC. Our staff and volunteers rose to the challenge of pivoting - almost overnight - and re-imagining the way we delivered services. They came together with exceptional teamwork, and the results are both heartwarming and inspiring:

- We served 1,325 veterans throughout the year on-site. Of those, 399 had never been to VOC before! We also provided remote services to 446 vets from all over the country, which was a 26% increase over 2019!
- We started a “Buddy Check” program and made 8,347 phone calls to vulnerable veterans in our community, checking on their health and welfare throughout the year.
- As a result of aggressive health and safety protocols, we did not have one SINGLE case of COVID in any of our housing facilities or shelters this year!
- We started a partnership with RTS whereby we now provide free unlimited bus passes to ALL veterans. We issued 650 passes, which resulted in more than 58,000 rides for vets this year!
- We provided food, clothing, and essential items through our Quartermaster 1,863 times. That is nearly double what we did in 2019! And for the first time ever, we also provided these services through home delivery for vets who could not get to VOC.
- Our Morale Center - which includes massage therapy, chiropractic care, peer support, laundry services, hydromassage, and a barbershop - was utilized 1,023 times in 2020, as compared to 442 times in 2019!
- We handed out nearly 50 tablets with internet connection for our most vulnerable clients so they could stay connected to loved ones and telehealth during the pandemic. We also installed sound-proof booths with iPads in our homeless shelters so our vets

could privately connect with family and friends when they couldn't do so in person.

- We opened Monroe County's first affordable housing complex for veterans and it was fully occupied within a few short weeks!
- And in a year where 49 million Americans filed for unemployment by the month of June, we still helped 155 veterans find meaningful employment.

VOC staff worked hard this year. We changed our operations, and we changed our perspectives. We kept our mission in the forefront of it all, and perhaps most importantly, we did all of this while taking steps to bring more diversity to VOC. We created a Diversity and Inclusion task force, developed a business case, which outlines the tremendous value of diversity, and we increased programming outreach to veterans of ALL demographics.

When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. Stay with us on this journey in 2021! Let's see what we can do together this year to continue to bring positivity and support to our veterans with innovative means.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Stradley

Laura Stradley
Executive Director
U.S. Army Veteran



**SERVING
THOSE
WHO
SERVE
U.S.**





COMMUNITY RALLIES AROUND VETS FOR ONE- DAY FOOD DRIVE

Sometimes it can be easy to overlook the collective power of the community, especially when a global pandemic forces everyone to change life as they know it. People became fearful; it made travel harder; jobs were lost. As businesses were shutting down and people isolated in their homes, we noticed a great and growing need for our local veterans. Now more than ever they needed the basic necessities - food and hygiene kits.

We immediately took action and called on the community to support us with a one-day food drive - Operation Canned Goods. During that day, the community came out in full force and donated thousands of food and hygiene items to our Quartermaster, ensuring that, amid all the uncertainty, our nation's heroes didn't have to wonder where their next meal would come from or how they would feed their families.



The community rallied together, during a global pandemic no less, and showed our local veterans just how much they care.

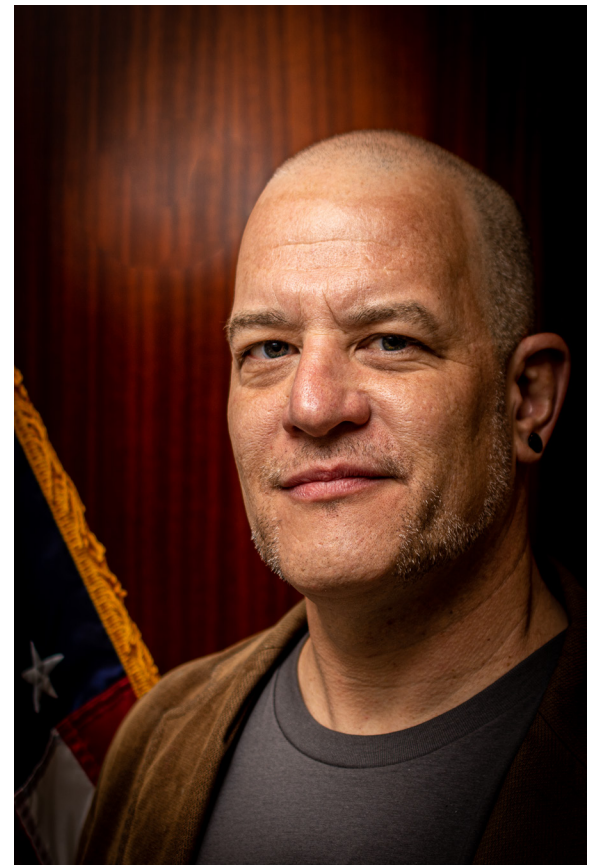
Want to learn more about our Quartermaster program or make a donation? Visit www.vocroc.org or call 585.546.1081.

OUR SERVICES:

- Employment Assistance
- Job Training
- Legal Counseling
- Morale Center
- Residential Program
- Veteran & Family Supportive Services
- Veterans Treatment Court
- Free Bus Passes
- Quartermaster
- Suicide Prevention/Awareness Support

RODERICK CASTLE JOINS VOC AS DIRECTOR OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Nearly 22 veterans commit suicide every day, and we are dedicated to doing everything we can to bring an end to this epidemic. That's why we hired Roderick Castle as our Director of Behavioral Health to lead this effort. Roderick will be responsible for many aspects of veteran behavioral health, including suicide prevention initiatives, trauma-informed practices, acting as a liaison within the community in matters related to behavioral health and being a first responder to mental health incidents.



Roderick is a NY licensed Creative Arts Therapist with the American Art Therapy Credentials Board, and he is certified in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI), Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and Mental Health First Aid. Roderick is also a member of the Rochester Threat Advisement Committee (ROCTAC) and is working toward certification with the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals. He is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and brings more than twenty years of practical experience to VOC.

A LITTLE PAIN RELIEF GOES A LONG WAY VOC'S HYDROMASSAGE CHAIR PROVIDES COMFORT AND HEALING FOR VETERANS



At times, pain can be an unmanageable force in our lives. It can come and go or be a constant, nagging feeling that not only affects us physically but also mentally. This seemed to be the case for two veterans living at Richards House, our transitional home for veterans.

But, through the use of the hydromassage chair at our Morale Center, one veteran has been able to go from a daily pain pill to one pill per week for his back pain, while another said that, among other supports, the chair has reduced his pain and helped him maintain his sobriety.

VOC is proud to offer these services to our nation's heroes and not only help them along their journey in life but also make sure they feel good while they do it.

2020 SPECIAL EVENTS RECAP



FLAG DAY

We hosted our annual Flag Day campaign virtually from June 8th, 2020 through the 14th. Community members had the opportunity to donate online and submit their Porch Patriot photos for a chance to win a prize from the Stars & Stripes Flag Store. Thank you to everyone who participated!



GOLF FORE VETS

We hosted our annual Golf Fore Vets tournament Monday, July 27th, 2020 at Midvale Country Club! Although we missed being able to host our big dinner, golfers teed off throughout the day and were able to finish with a champagne toast with members from our Board of Directors!



POUND THE GROUND VIRTUAL 5K

We hosted our annual Pound the Ground 5K from August 19th, 2020 through the 30th. The virtual event gave participants the opportunity to run or walk on their own time and at their own pace! More than 300 people from across the world signed up to participate in support of VOC and veterans!



RAISE THE FLAG FOR AWARENESS

A new event in 2020 year, our Raise the Flag for Awareness Campaign ran during Suicide Prevention Week September 6th through the 12th. Aiming to raise awareness of veteran suicide, community members were given free flags, and we hosted a panel discussion about the warning signs of suicide.



A STARS & STRIPES VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

We hosted our annual Stars & Stripes Celebration virtually on November 6th, 2020 sharing stories of success from local veterans and featuring songs from nationally recognized Voices of Service. We also hosted our Hope for Heroes telethon on Veterans Day on WROC-TV 8.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON! VISIT VOCROC.ORG OFTEN FOR NEWS AND UPDATES ABOUT OUR 2021 SPECIAL EVENTS!

SHOP LOCAL. SUPPORT VETS



The Stars & Stripes Flag Store has everything you need to show your patriotism! Even better, every dollar stays local and directly supports critically needed services for veterans at Veterans Outreach Center. Shop now!

www.eflagstore.com
Now available on Amazon!



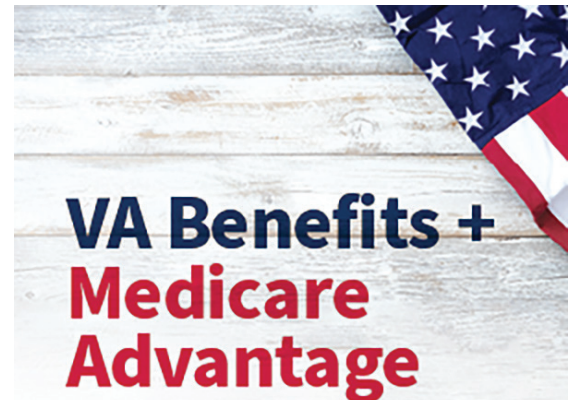
- Military & First Responder Apparel & Merchandise
- Pet collars and leashes
- Stop the 22 Apparel
- And more!

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS HOW YOU CAN PROVIDE FOR LOCAL VETERANS



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It's an investment*



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Medicare
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You've earned both.

Learn more about the
MVP Medicare Patriot Plan.





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