



OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: VETERAN SERVICES

ALIGNING BOARD PRIORITIES WITH OPTIMIZED RESOURCES

PEOPLE FOCUSED. PERFORMANCE DRIVEN.

Goal Statement

To assist veterans and their dependents in securing all entitled benefits earned through honorable military service, and to advocate for veterans' interests in the community.

Strategic Initiatives/Support Highlights

Economy

- Continued to focus resources on assisting veterans.
- Helped veterans and their dependents with processing benefit claims and obtaining other benefits entitled to them through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other Federal Agencies.
- Continued to fund and administer Leon County's Active Duty Grant Program, to help offset financial obligations for active duty service members and their families.
- Developed and funded Leon County's Veterans Emergency Assistance Program, which provides veterans in need with emergency financial support for expenses such as rent, utilities, temporary shelter, and transportation for medical treatment.
- Continued annual Operation Thank You events by honoring and welcoming home local Vietnam Veterans with a well-deserved Welcome Home ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, followed by a pancake breakfast served by Leon County Commissioners.

Contact Us

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VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

- Leon County has a long tradition of supporting its veteran community. In FY13, the Leon County Veteran Services Division:
 - » Assisted more than 3,600 veterans and dependents in person.
 - » Facilitated claim actions that resulted in Leon County veterans receiving more than \$10.1 million in new awards.
 - » Assisted over 50 unemployed veterans since May 15, 2012 to receive monies for retraining through the newly established Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, resulting in over \$975,000 in revenue being brought into the County.
 - » Sent "Welcome" letters to all separating veterans who have designated Tallahassee as their home of record or as the place they will be relocating to after separation. These "Welcome" letters introduce Veteran Services and the services provided.
- To honor and recognize the service of Vietnam Veterans, Leon County hosted 2013 Operation Thank You at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Following the success of the 2012 event, the Board of County Commissioners designated Operation Thank You as an annual event, as part of its strategic initiative to support local armed forces members, veterans and their families. The event included the presentation of colors, performance of the National Anthem, remarks from Vietnam Veteran and former Prisoner of War Bruce Archer, and formal recognition of the Vietnam veterans. Over 400 citizens attended the event. Veterans were provided a copy of a proclamation from the Board of County Commissioners and a ceremonial challenge coin.
- The Board of County Commissioners continues to support and fund the Leon County Active Duty Grant Program to help offset financial obligations for active duty service members and their families. For FY13, the County distributed more than \$29,000 to veterans and their families through this program.
- The Board of County Commissioners developed and approved funding for the Veterans Emergency Assistance Program, which provides emergency financial assistance to help qualifying veterans meet critical, basic needs such as rent, mortgage, and utilities. The County distributed more than \$19,000 to veterans through this program in FY13.
- Leon County was a partner in the inaugural Honor Flight Tallahassee, which transported 79 World War II veterans and support personnel to Washington, D.C. to visit memorials dedicated to honor their service and sacrifices. An Honor Flight trip is provided at no cost to the veterans, and entirely funded by local fundraisers and community support. Leon County contributed staff support and \$15,000 to help offset the costs of this momentous, emotional event.
- Leon County was a partner in Homeless Veterans Stand Down, held in Tallahassee. This national initiative is modeled after the Stand Down concept used during the Vietnam War to provide a safe retreat for units returning from combat: a secure base camp where troops could take care of personal hygiene, get clean uniforms, enjoy warm meals, receive medical and dental care, and so on. That is the purpose of Stand Down for homeless veterans, which requires bringing support services to one accessible location. Leon County provided \$10,000 in direct funding, provided veteran benefits information to 300 attendees, processed 25 benefits claims, provided computer and print capabilities, and had provided staff support for formal court hearings.



Did You Know

In FY13, Veterans Affairs revenue for Leon County veterans and their dependents totaled over \$69 million.

Leon County is home to approximately 19,000 veterans.

SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED US



Honor Flight



Leon County government is dedicated to serving veterans. In 2012, Leon County served over 18,000 veterans through welcome letters, emails, face-to-face consultations and phone calls. For his or her service, a veteran has earned many benefits. But sometimes the application process can be complicated. Leon County staff works to help veterans and their spouses process medical claims, retirement benefits, and even to receive assistance for certain approved emergency needs like heating and cooling.

But being a one-stop shop for local veterans is not the whole story of what Leon County does. In 2013, Leon County engaged the community on veteran events such as Honor Flight, Operation Thank You, and the Veterans Day Parade. Leon County supported Honor Flight Tallahassee, a program that flies World War II veterans – at no cost – to Washington D.C. to visit memorials dedicated to their service. Leon County Emergency Medical Services staff and others served as chaperones on the day-long trip. For some of the attendees, that day was their first chance to see the memorials honoring their service. Leon County also honored veterans at home. With the 2013 Operation Thank You event, Leon County recognized the service of Vietnam Veterans, many of whom returned without a proper welcome. Over 150 veterans attended the morning ceremony, a day that marked the 40-year anniversary of American troop withdrawal from Vietnam.

Veterans Day Parade



Operation Thank You



Operation Thank You: Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans

Honor Flight