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Executive Director

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Ron DeSantis
Governor
Ashley Moody
Attorney General
Jimmy Patronis
Chief Financial Officer
Nikki Fried
Commissioner of Agriculture

DATE: December 21, 2021

TO: The Honorable Ron DeSantis
The Honorable Ashley Moody
The Honorable Jimmy Patronis
The Honorable Nikki Fried

FROM: James S. "Hammer" Hartsell
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Quarterly Report – First Quarter, Fiscal Year 2021 - 2022

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs submits the Quarterly Report for the First Quarter of the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year, covering the period July 1 - September 30, 2021.

The Quarterly Report is submitted pursuant to the procedures authorized by Rule 55-1.003 Florida Administrative Code (06/10/2008).

If you have any questions regarding any matter covered by this report, please contact Executive Director James S. Hartsell at (727) 518-3202 or Legislative and Cabinet Affairs Director Roy Clark at (850) 487-1533.

CC:
Chris Sprowls, Speaker of the House, Florida House of Representatives
Wilton Simpson, President, Florida Senate
Chris Spencer, Policy Director, Governor's Office of Policy and Budget
Eric Miller, Policy Chief, Local Administration and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee
Diana Caldwell, Staff Director, Military and Veterans Affairs and Space, and Domestic Security

Attachment 1: FDVA Quarterly Report

ATTACHMENT 1
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
FIRST QUARTER REPORT
July 1 – September 30, 2021

This report covers the activities of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) for the First Quarter of the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year.

1) Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Administrative Highlights

a) Current Issues/Concerns

i) Executive Direction:

On August 27, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) celebrated an Open House for the Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home (SVNH) in Port St. Lucie. The following Legislators and Government Official joined FDVA for the Open House ceremony:

- The U.S. House of Representative Brian Mast
- The U.S. House District Director Jordan Sejour represented Representative Brian Mast.
- The U.S. House Outreach Coordinator Angel Robertson represented Representative Brian Mast.
- The U.S. Senate Regional Director Greg Lanowski represented U.S. Senator Marco Rubio.
- The VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN) 8 Director Dr. Miguel H. LaPuz
- Florida Senator Danny Burgess
- Florida Senator Gayle Harrell
- Florida Senator Tom Wright
- Florida Representative John Snyder
- Florida House Legislative Assistant Kaley Adams represented Florida Representative Dana Trabulsy.
- Florida Health Care Association (FHCA) Secretary Julie Ann Kemman
- FHCA Public Relations & Communications Professional Kristen Knapp
- Department Of Health (DOH) Nursing Director Angela Roberson
- DOH County Health Department Administrator Clint Sperber
- Florida Department Of Management Services Secretary J. Todd Inman
- DMS Director Of Real Estate Tom Berger
- DMS Deputy Secretary of Business Operations Patrick Gillespie
- DMS Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs Sam Kerce
- DMS Construction Projects Consultant Manager Kurt Michaels



The completion and opening of the new State Veterans' Nursing Homes is a primary goal of Governor DeSantis' list to improve service for veterans in Florida. With the Ardie R. Copas SVNH, the skilled nursing care capacity has expanded to 840 beds for elder and disabled Florida veterans.

Executive Director James "Hammer" Hartsell appointed Robert "Bob" Asztalos as Deputy Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. FDVA's new Deputy Executive Director has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Florida Veterans Foundation, Vice President of Fleet Reserve Association, Chief Operating Officer for Medical Equipment and Supplies of America and Chief Lobbyist for the Florida Health Care

Association. He also served in Washington, D.C., as a Senior Congressional Affairs Representative for the American Health Care Association, Associate Director of Government Affairs with American Physical Therapy Association and Legislative Specialist with the Wilmer, Cutler and Pickering law firm. With his wealth of knowledge and experience in healthcare, Deputy Executive Director Asztalos leads the State Veterans' Homes (SVH) with healthcare operations. Furthermore, he is also unveiling an effort to increase revenues for FDVA.

On July 15, FDVA Directors at the Largo office welcomed the new Deputy Executive Director. Director Asztalos also conducted introductory site visits to the following State Veterans' Homes.

- On July 14, the Clyde E. Lassen SVNH in St. Augustine and Emory Bennett SVNH in Daytona Beach.
- On August 18, the Lake Baldwin SVNH in Orlando.
- On August 25, the Baldomero Lopez SVNH in Land O' Lakes.
- On September 2, the Clifford Sims SVNH in Panama City.
- On September 16, the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City. That afternoon, he also met with the FDVA Field Office Staff located at the VA Medical Center in Lake City.
- On September 29, the Clyde E. Lassen SVNH in Saint Augustine.

Chief of Staff Alfred "Al" Carter also conducted a site visit of the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. SVDH in Lake City on July 22.

Executive Director Hartsell conducted a site visit of the Emory L. Bennett SVNH in Daytona Beach on July 27.

Executive Director Hartsell briefed the Governor's Executive Office on veteran-related challenges and resources. He also coordinated meetings with the Governor's Chief of Staff and Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff to provide continuous updates on the department's challenges, actions, and construction progress of the two new State Veterans' Nursing Homes. In addition, Executive Director Hartsell ensured to the Cabinet members that the department was working in concert with legislative goals, missions and intent.

Deputy Executive Director Asztalos coordinated guidance and support with the FDVA Budget Bureau and Veterans Florida for the FDVA budget request for FY 2022-23.

Executive Director Hartsell and State Veterans' Homes Director Connie Tolley attended the National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) Annual Conference in Biloxi, Mississippi, during August 8-13.

Executive Director Hartsell briefed senior leadership on the department's COVID-19 protocol and vaccine distributions, agency budget, legislative updates, and operational challenges at weekly Board of Directors meetings.

On September 8, Deputy Executive Director Asztalos and Chief of Staff Carter coordinated the Way Ahead meeting with the State Veterans' Homes. At the meeting, the Chief of Staff informed the facilities staff about the new mandate of the COVID-19 vaccination policy for the healthcare staff. In addition, FDVA provided COVID-19 vaccinations to the staff and veteran residents at each facility and continuously encouraged unvaccinated staff to receive vaccines.

Communications and External Affairs Director and Emergency Coordinating Officer Steve Murray provided continuous updates to the agency regarding the Governor's mitigation and remediation efforts on COVID-19. Additionally, FDVA Emergency Coordinating Officer Director Murray provided progressive weather updates to the State Veterans' Homes.

Executive Director Hartsell and Deputy Executive Director Asztalos participated in the monthly



Board of Directors meetings with the Florida Veterans Foundation in support of the Direct

Executive Director Hartsell participated in the Easterseals Florida Camp Challenge in Sorrento on July 27. Director Hartsell presented remarks to the Easterseals' President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sue Ventura, staff and volunteers for their commitment to the disabled military and veteran's disability-related services. Furthermore, Deputy Executive Director Asztalos toured the Easterseals Florida DayBreak adult day care on July 28.

❖ **Veterans Education and Awareness**

FDVA Office of Communications produced the *Forward March* Veterans' Newsletter for July, August and September. The newsletter has 35,000 subscribers.

As the Southeast District Vice President of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans' Affairs (NASDVA) Executive Committee, Executive Director Hartsell briefed the committee on VA benefits and tools. Executive Director Hartsell and Communications Director Murray also attended the 2021 Annual Convention of the NASDVA in Reno, Nevada, during September 12-16.

Executive Director Hartsell served as a keynote speaker at the VETS4VETS conference in Jacksonville on August 21.

FDVA anticipates expanding initiatives and outreach activities for veterans. FDVA Leadership continuously connects and collaborates with other organizations that support veterans and their families. During the first quarter, Executive Director Hartsell and Deputy Executive Director Asztalos met with many veteran organization outreach programs, projects and initiatives to assist veterans and their families. The organizations include; Resiliency Training Program, Jacksonville Military Veterans Coalition, Council on Homelessness Committee - Florida Department of Children and Families, Military Honors Service for WWII veteran James T. Collins, Clara White Mission Inc., Florida Vietnam Prisoners Of War Missing In Action (POW/MIA) Bracelet Memorial, the University of South Florida James A. Haley Tower Expansion project, and the University of Florida Haley Brain Wellness Center in Jacksonville.

During this quarter, Executive Director Hartsell and the FDVA Leadership attended meetings or conferences with; Gold Star Family Monument Committee, Guardianship Improvement Task Force, Troops Inc., Florida Veterans Council, National Cemetery Monuments Committee, VA/Medicaid Pilot Program Committee, Homelessness Continuum of Care Committee, Joint Veterans Support Committee, Gold Star Family Monument Dedication Committee, Council on Homelessness Continuum of Care Committee, Veterans Research, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Early Psychosis Intervention Coordination (EPIC) Specialty Care Program Advisory Board, Veterans of Color Technical Assistance Call Series and the Florida Senior Living Association Conference 2021.

To promote veterans outreach and awareness, Executive Director Hartsell and FDVA Leadership also participated in events with the National POW/MIA Recognition Day, Veterans' Treatment Court (VTC) virtual graduation, 9/11 Patriot Day Remembrance, American Veterans (AMVETS) Post 98 Rededication and the Florida Health Care Association Veteran's Recognition ceremony.

❖ **Suicide Prevention/Governor's Challenge Efforts**

On July 1, FDVA and its partners launched a new collaborative initiative to help prevent suicide among service members, veterans and their families. The initiative is known as the Governor's Challenge to prevent suicide in the state. The statewide initiative uses evidence-based practices to prevent and reduce suicide attempts. FDVA unveiled the program in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). In addition, the program encourages interested stakeholders to increase their statewide suicide prevention efforts.

On July 14, First Lady Casey DeSantis launched the Hope for healing website. The website is an aggregated tool to connect veterans and their families with federal, state, local, private sectors, faith-based and non-profit mental health resources. The resource links are also available from the FDVA website at <https://floridavets.org>.

In addition, on August 17, the FDVA Office of Communications published an article on mental health providing links to the support tools and resources for veterans and their families. During August 17-19, Executive Director Hartsell also provided advisory support to the Department of Defense regarding Kabul, Afghanistan. Executive Director Hartsell also made remarks at the teleconference with VA on the impact to the veterans due to the Expiration of the Federal Eviction Moratorium.

FDVA Leadership participated in monthly virtual sessions with the Governor's Challenge Workgroups and the Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council. Also attended weekly in-person meetings with Crisis Center of Tampa Bay President and CEO Clara Reynolds.

Executive Director Hartsell participated in the Stop, Drop and Push Campaign with the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals in Orlando on September 29.

❖ **Women Veterans**

Executive Director Hartsell and Deputy Executive Director Asztalos collaborated with the Florida Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. In addition, Deputy Executive Director Asztalos and Florida Women Veterans Coordinator Vanessa Thomas attended a monthly teleconference with the National Center for Women Veterans (NCWV). Coordinator Thomas served as liaison to FDVA and VA and also assisted Women Veterans in Florida with their earned benefits.

Women Veterans Coordinator Special Report: Due to Covid-19, events were limited to virtual events for state and national meetings. We are regular monthly attendees to the National Center for Women Veterans (CWV). We are also involved with the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs fact finding Committee on Women Veteran Benefits and Communications, created within FDVA to assess the needs of Women Veterans in Florida and if Veterans' benefits and communications are tailored correctly to Women Veterans. Florida has approximately 1.5 million Veterans of which 162,000 are women. It is important state and federal Veterans' benefits are accessed by all eligible Veterans. Because services and communications are generally geared toward male Veterans, the Committee will assess from Women Veterans their opinions and any recommendations for improvement.

❖ **Community Outreach**

Deputy Executive Director Asztalos and FDVA Leadership provided community outreach and site visits with the Pierce Clinic of Chiropractic and Pines of Sarasota Management Corporation.

Executive Director Hartsell and FDVA Leadership represented FDVA in the community at conferences with; Florida State Agency Chiefs of Staff, the Suwannee Health and Rehabilitation Center, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Florida Missing Children's Day, Columbia County School Health Advisory Council Committee, the Leadership Conference, and Personal Care Attendant Program Florida.

❖ Legislative Activities

On September 23, Executive Director Hartsell presented the FDVA Legislative Budget Request (LBR) of FY 2022-23 at the roundtable conference with Governor DeSantis. Also, he provided an overview of the department's operations, veteran-related programs and initiatives.

Executive Director Hartsell and FDVA Leadership met with Cabinet members, Legislators, Governor's Staff and Governor's Office of Policy and Budget (OPB) regarding the Department's proposed budget and veteran-related bills for the 2022 Legislative Session. During the meetings, he proposed best practices for veterans' initiatives to improve benefit access for Florida's 1.5 million veterans and their family members.

On September 20, Executive Director Hartsell presented the FDVA LBR at the House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee meeting. He also addressed the committee members on the new initiatives and long-term goals of the FDVA. Executive Director Hartsell also presented at the House Local Administration & Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on veteran-related mental health and FDVA initiatives. Jeff Obos and Roy Clark joined Hartsell at the meetings.

Executive Director Hartsell and FDVA Senior Management met with legislators and/or represented FDVA at the following committee meetings to support veteran-related legislative bills in Tallahassee.

- Deputy Executive Director Asztalos attended the House Finance & Facilities Subcommittee meeting on September 21.
- Executive Director Hartsell joined Governor DeSantis at the 2021 Reagan Day Dinner in Wesley Chapel on September 10.
- Executive Director Hartsell attended the welcome reception of President John Thrasher at the Florida Southern Group in Tallahassee on September 20.
- Executive Director Hartsell Joined Community Leaders at the Ringing of the Bell ceremony and Representative Paul Renner's House Speaker designation ceremony in Tallahassee on September 21.

❖ Proclamation

Governor DeSantis signed proclamations in Florida to commemorate veterans for their selfless dedication to the nation. FDVA Office of Communications drafted the following proclamations for the Governor.

- On August 3, the Governor released Florida Purple Heart Day Proclamation.
- On September 2, the Governor released the POW/MIA Day in Florida Proclamation.
- On September 20, the Governor released the annual Florida Veteran Suicide Prevention Month in Florida Proclamation.
- On September 22, Governor released Gold Star Family Day in Florida Proclamation.

ii) Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance:

❖ Bureau of Veterans' Claims Services

The Bureau of Veterans' Claims Service's first quarter production review of rating decisions improved from the previous quarter. The Bureau continues to have an increase of virtual hearings for the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). The Bureau of Claims Services processed 13,690 claims rating decision reviews of disability benefits claims through the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS). As of June 1, Claims Services reopened for walk-in services, while the St. Petersburg Regional Office prefers in-person visits by appointment only. The Board of Veterans Appeals partially opened for hearings but not for our local operations other than virtual hearings with its Washington, D.C. facility. The BVA video hearings resumed in August.

Claims Services further anticipates BVA Travel Board hearing with two Veterans Law Judges to begin at St. Petersburg Regional Office in October.

Local in-person personal hearings continued at a steady pace. The Veterans' Benefits and Assistance statewide phone and email box received 5,582 inquires throughout this period. The Bureau anticipates an increase in the future for in-person meetings as COVID-19 restrictions are reduced for Federal facilities. Accordingly, the Bureau has expanded the virtual hearings with the VA and has conducted 379 hearings. As always, we continue to stand ready to meet the increasing demands of veterans' appeals requirements.

Event	First Quarter	YTD FY 2021-22	First Quarter FY 2020-21
Retroactive Compensation	\$54,895,241	\$54,895,241	\$41,616,436
Largest Single Retro. Benefit (1)	\$433,959	\$433,959	\$496,582
Debt Waiver Resolutions	\$79,744	\$79,744	\$12,107
Notices of Disagreement	2,983	2,983	2,304
Statements of Argument in Appeals Cases (2)	102	102	232
Act as Representative at Hearings*	216	216	97
Veterans' Appeals Hearings*	142	142	96
Number of Ratings Reviewed	13,690	13,690	10,256

(1) The "Largest Single Retro. Benefits" Year to Date for FY 2020-21 and the Actual for FY 2021-22 reflects only the largest benefit amount that was received for the quarter.

(2) The appeals representation process includes formal filing of the appeal application, and paralegal representation with the veteran at the Regional Office and in teleconferences with the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

❖ Women Veterans

Florida Women Veterans Coordinator Vanessa Thomas attended a monthly teleconference with the National Center for Women Veterans (NCWV). Coordinator Thomas served as liaison to FDVA and VA and assisted Women Veterans in Florida with their earned benefits. In addition, coordinator Thomas also assisted the FDVA Fact-Finding Committee. The committee provides information on healthcare, benefits, services, awareness, outreach events and finding new women veterans' initiatives. There are over 162,000 women veterans out of 1.5 million veterans in Florida.

❖ Bureau of Veterans' Field Services

The Bureau of Veterans' Field Services continues to provide in-person and virtual services to veterans and their families. Miami and Broward areas remain closed to VCE's due to COVID-19 pandemic protocols. Field Services advocated for 36,160 veterans and their families completing 7,910 new disability claims while conducting 92 outreach events. Field Services' supervisors assisted the Bureau of Veterans' Claims by reviewing and entering 631 rating decisions.

Event	First Quarter	YTD FY 2021-22	First Quarter FY 2020-21
Number of Issue Resolutions	7,694	7,694	4,227
Total Amount of Issues Resolution	\$22,304,715	\$22,304,715	\$14,532,515
Outreach Visits	92	92	42
Veterans Served at Outreach	2,132	2,132	647
Bedside Interviews	11	11	8
Walk-ins / Counseling	12,116	12,116	3,853
Disability Claims	7,910	7,910	4,546
Voter Registration	687	687	824
Homeless Walk In	101	101	39
Ratings Reviewed	631	631	934

Event	First Quarter	YTD FY 2021-22	First Quarter FY 2020-21
Reintegration and Pre-Deployment Events for Guard and Reserve Units	2	2	0
Homeless Veteran Stand Down Events	1	1	0
Medical Center Welcome Home Events	0	0	0
Congressional Open House Events	0	0	0
National Conferences	0	0	0
New Patient Orientation	0	0	6
Transition Assistance Briefings	19	19	5
Other Events	68	68	31

❖ **The Bureau of State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans' Education and Training**

H.R.7105 Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, PL 116-315, passage impacted State Approving Agency (SAA) approval and re-approval requirements for the participating educational institutions. With heightened requirements for SAA oversight and accountability pertaining to the approval and re-approval of facilities participating in GI Bill® Veterans Education Benefits, the Florida SAA's work burden increased significantly. However, SAA developed a comprehensive program to work through the continuous shifting of goals and the requirements of the new Act. The new requirements also directly impact the veterans. Many of the changes enhance or expand education benefits for veterans, service members, families and survivors and provide the improvement and/or expansion of various GI Bill® programs. In addition, the shift of veteran beneficiary debt to the certified school from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) impacted the veteran benefits enrollment, course registrations and other academic processes.

Per the new requirement for the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33), veteran's beneficiary verifies their enrollment monthly with VA. The schools certify veteran beneficiary enrollment twice with VA during each enrollment period.

With over 1,000 approved schools and OJT/Apprenticeship facilities in the state, the impact has been staggering. SAA approved 36 new facilities and withdrew 31 facilities during the FY 2021 (federal fiscal year: October 2020-September 2021). However, some of the withdrawn facilities were reenrolled with a consolidated facility code to enable centralized VA staffing teams. These changes may have reduced the GI Bill funds for the state. Regardless of these changes, the Florida SAA reported a highly scrutinized and successful contract year for FY 2021 with VA.

Event	First Quarter	YTD FY 2021-22	First Quarter FY 2020-21
SAA Programs Approved	4,428	4,428	4,682
Other Approval	681	681	894
Compliance Visits	18	18	38
Inspection Visits	3	3	2
Outreach Activities (1)	118	118	190
Liaison Activities (2)	119	119	246
Technical Assistance (3)	720	720	1,022

iii) **Division of State Veterans' Homes:**

Executive Director Hartsell, Deputy Executive Director Asztalos, State Veterans' Homes Connie Tolley and State Veterans' Homes Administrators attended the Florida Health Care Association's (FHCA) 2021 Annual Conference and Trade Show in Orlando on July 27. Executive Director Hartsell, Director Tolley and State Veterans' Homes Administrator Rodney

Watford received FHCA Bronze Award for the demonstrated commitment to quality of care at the Chester Sims SVNH in Panama City.

The Division of State Veterans' Homes administration is diligently working on construction projects for two new State Veterans' Nursing Homes.

- **Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie:**

The FDVA celebrated an Open House event for the Ardie R Copas SVNH in Port St. Lucie on August 27. The home is scheduled to open for resident admissions in the beginning of 2022. For admission, a veteran must be a Florida resident, honorably discharged from the armed services and have a certificate of need from a VA physician.

The 120-bed home in Port St. Lucie is named after Fort Pierce resident Sgt. Ardie R. Copas was killed in action in Vietnam in 1970. The home has 60 beds reserved for residents with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Also, the home will include six bariatric rooms for patients with chronic and severe obesity. The home is equipped with additional facilities such as a beauty and barbershop, café, chapel, a multi-purpose room, dining area and an in-house kitchen to serve daily fresh meals to the residents and staff. The 121,000 square-foot facility is designed with the best effort to create a feel-like home atmosphere for the veterans' residents.

This will be the eighth Veterans' Affairs nursing home in the state. The other seven State Veterans' Homes are located in Daytona Beach, Land O' Lakes, Orlando, Panama City, Pembroke Pines, Port Charlotte and St. Augustine.

- **Lake Baldwin State Veterans' Nursing Home in Orlando:**

The home is scheduled to be open for resident admissions around the beginning of 2022. Indoor construction projects continue, which include HVAC certifications, plumbing rerouting, etc. The furniture installation and IT system migration at the facility is in progress. We continue to work toward a certificate of occupancy from AHCA.

2) Required Items per Florida Administrative Code/F.A.C. 55-1.003(s):

a) Contracts (F.A.C. 55-1.003(e))

- i. Purchase Orders processed: 588 for the total of \$4,992,440.
- ii. E-Quotes processed: 39.
- iii. FDVA "Housing & Reintegration Services" legislative contract, with Five STAR Veterans Center, Inc., closed out 7/14/2021. Total contract amount \$250,000.
- iv. FDVA "Veterans PTSD Therapeutic K-9 Services" legislative contract, with K-9's for Warriors, Inc., closed out 7/12/2021. Total contract amount \$600,000.
- v. FDVA "Veterans Legal Services Helpline" legislative contract, with Bay Area Legal Services, Inc., closed out 7/22/2021. Total contract amount \$500,000.
- vi. FDVA "Veterans Alternative Treatments" legislative contract, with University of South Florida, closed out 7/14/2021. Total contract amount \$200,000.
- vii. NEW - FDVA "Housing & Reintegration Services" legislative contract, with Five STAR Veterans Center, Inc., executed 7/13/2021. Total contract amount \$250,000.
- viii. NEW - FDVA "Veterans PTSD Therapeutic K-9 Services" legislative contract, with K-9's for Warriors, Inc., executed 7/13/2021. Total contract amount \$750,000.
- ix. NEW - FDVA "Veterans Legal Services Helpline" legislative contract, with Bay Area Legal Services, Inc., executed 6/30/2021. Total contract amount \$500,000.

- x. NEW - FDVA "Veterans Crisis Emergency Fund" legislative contract, with Florida Veterans Foundation, executed 7/22/2021. Total contract amount \$245,000.
- xi. NEW - FDVA "Suicide Prevention Program" legislative contract, with NE Florida Fire Watch Council, executed 8/6/2021. Total contract amount \$200,000.
- xii. NEW - FDVA "Assisted Therapy for Veterans" legislative contract, with Quantum Leap Farm, executed 7/15/2021. Total contract amount \$120,000.
- xiii. NEW - FDVA "Veterans Suicide Prevention" legislative contract, with SOF Missions, executed 7/6/2021. Total contract amount \$150,000.
- xiv. NEW - FDVA "VISN-8 Pharmacy Services" contract, with USDVA, executed 8/30/2021. Total contract amount \$4,234,948.
- xv. FDVA "Veterans Benefits Information System" contract, with Tyler Technologies, Inc. (formerly DataSpec, Inc.), closed out 8/2/2021. Total contract amount \$269,750.
- xvi. FDVA "Time Clock/Payroll Based Journal System" contract, with IT Computing Services, Inc., closed out 7/16/2021. Total contract amount \$244,504.
- xvii. FDVA "CMS Medicare/Medicaid Cost Reporting" contract, with Moore Stephens Lovelace, PA, closed out 7/14/2021. Total contract amount \$494,948.
- xxviii. Lake Baldwin CLC "New Fencing" contract Amendment No. 1 (extension), with Pergola Roof Miami, LLC, executed 6/30/2021. Total contract amount \$48,422.
- xix. Lake Baldwin CLC "New Fencing" contract, with Pergola Roof Miami, LLC, closed out 9/14/2021. Total contract amount \$48,422.
- xx. Jacobson SVNH "Automatic Transfer Switch" solicitation (Invitation to Bid – ITB) issued 5/17/2021. Pre-bid meeting 6/3/2021. Bid opening 6/22/2021. Contract awarded to with Santa Fe Professional Services, Inc., 6/25/2021. Contract executed 7/9/2021. Total contract amount \$201,250.
- xxi. Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH "Renovations" DMS contract Amendment No. 1 (revised scope), with OHL Arellano, executed and received 9/1/2021. Total contract amount \$5,500,000 (65% federally funded; 35% state funded).
- xxii. Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH "Renovations" DMS contract Amendment No. 2 (revised scope), with OHL Arellano, executed and received 9/1/2021. Total contract amount \$5,500,000 (65% federally funded; 35% state funded).
- xxiii. Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH "Automatic Transfer Switch" contract Amendment No. 3 (extension), with Santa Fe Professional Services, Inc., executed 7/27/2021. Total contract amount \$181,000.
- xxiv. Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH "Automatic Transfer Switch" contract Amendment No. 4 (extension), with Santa Fe Professional Services, Inc., executed 9/9/2021. Total contract amount \$181,000.
- xxv. Clifford C. Sims SVNH "Automatic Transfer Switch" contract Amendment No. 2 (extension), with Zabatt Engine Services, Inc., executed 8/6/2021. Total contract amount \$162,000.
- xxvi. Emory L. Bennett SVNH "Kitchen Tray Line Replacement" contract Amendment No. 2 (extension), with Direct Supply, Inc., executed 9/17/2021. Total contract amount \$79,596.
- xxvii. Lassen SVNH "Sink Alcove" solicitation (Sole-Source) PUR-7776 Purchase Intent issued 7/13/2021. No protest received by 7/22/2021. PUR-7778 Decision Intent issued 7/22/2021. No protest received by 7/27/2021. Contract awarded to Avid Construction & Consulting 7/27/2021. Contract executed 7/29/2021. Total contract amount \$43,573.

b) Consultants (F.A.C. 55-1.003(h))

i. None

c) Leases (F.A.C. 55-1.003(i))

i. FDVA made no additions, alterations or modifications to leased space this quarter.

d) Lawsuits/Claims in Litigation or Settled this Quarter (F.A.C. 55-1.003(3) (k) and (3) (l))

- i. **3 - General Liability Claims:** (2 new this Quarter), 0 won, 0 settled, 0 lost, 3 pending.
- ii. **2 - Employment Liability Claims:** (1 new this Quarter), 0 won, 0 settled, 0 lost, 2 pending.
- iii. **1 - Other Liability Claims:** (1 new this Quarter), 0 won, 1 settled, 0 lost, 0 pending.

e) Contracts and agreements required to carry out programs approved by the Legislature or Governor and Cabinet (F.A.C. 55-1.003(3) (e))

i. None

f) Professional Services (F.A.C. 55-1.003(3) (k))

i. None

g) Notifications to State Attorneys, Sheriffs or other Law Enforcement (F.A.C. 551.003(3) (m))

i. None.

h) Donations (F.A.C. 55-1.003(n))

i. Non-Cash Donations Received by State Veterans' Homes

First Quarter				
Facility	Item	Quantity	Value	Total
	Robert H. Jenkins SVDH had no donations this quarter.			
Robert H. Jenkins SVDH, Lake City				\$0
	Ardie R. Copas SVNH had no donations this quarter.			
Ardie R. Copas SVNH, Port St. Lucie				\$0
	Emory L. Bennett SVNH had no donations this quarter.			
Emory L. Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach				\$0
	TV-40"	1	\$180	\$180
	Boom Box	1	\$189	\$189
Baldomero Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes				\$369
	TV-43"	1	\$100	\$100
	Wheel Chair	2	\$25	\$50
Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines				\$150
	Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH had no donations this quarter.			
Clifford C. Sims SVNH, Panama City				\$0
	Clifford C. Sims SVNH had no donations this quarter.			
Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte				\$0
	Clyde E. Lassen SVNH had no donations this quarter.			
Clyde E. Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine				\$0
Total Non-Cash Donations				\$519

(1) State Veterans' Nursing Home (SVNH)
(2) State Veterans' Domiciliary Home (SVDH)

iii. Cash Donations Received by State Veterans' Homes

Facilities	First Quarter	YTD FY 2020-21
Robert H. Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	\$810	\$810
Ardie R. Copas SVNH, Port St. Lucie	\$0	\$0
Emory L. Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	\$0	\$0
Baldomero Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	\$651	\$651
Alexander "Sandy" Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	\$1,100	\$1,100
Clifford C. Sims SVNH, Panama City	\$1,025	\$1,025
Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	\$0	\$0
Clyde E. Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	\$1,454	\$1,454
Total Cash Donations	\$5,040	\$5,040

i) Memberships in Professional Organizations Paid (F.A.C. 55-1.003(p))

First Quarter				
	Activity Connection	FHCA	NASVH	Total Per Facility
Robert H. Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	\$130	\$1,652	\$1,000	\$2,782
Emory L. Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	\$130	\$4,316	\$1,000	\$5,446
Baldomero Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	\$130	\$4,329	\$1,000	\$5,459
Alexander "Sandy" Alexander, Pembroke Pines	\$130	\$4,354	\$1,000	\$5,484
Clifford C. Sims SVNH, Panama City	\$130	\$4,316	\$1,000	\$5,446
Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	\$130	\$4,341	\$1,000	\$5,471
Clyde E. Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	\$130	\$4,341	\$1,000	\$5,471
State Veterans' Homes Total	\$1,040	\$27,648	\$7,000	\$35,688
The National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, Inc.				\$600
The Institute for Public Procurement (NIGP)				\$370
Institute of Internal Auditors				\$350
Total				\$37,008
(1) Activity Connection - Activities Membership				
(2) Florida Health Care Association (FHCA)				
(3) National Association of State Veterans' Homes (NASVH)				



3) Veterans Florida (VF)

During the first quarter of fiscal year 2021-22, VF submitted a Legislative Budget Request of \$2.4 million for FY 2022-23 through the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

❖ Marketing

The DoD Warrior Games were canceled due to COVID-19 concerns, and we began discussions with VISIT Florida to reallocate the \$100,000 sponsorship, including creating new video content highlighting Florida's regions. We also started planning VISIT's upcoming LinkedIn campaign. We finalized agriculture ads in print and at the iHeart Radio's streaming platform. We worked with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University to issue a joint press release promoting the SkillBridge partnership and FloridaPolitics.com. Moreover, VF presented the results of the Virtual Expo to the Bank of America sponsors metrics for events.

Network Partner	Performance		
	July	August	September
Unique Website Visitors	3,799	3,611	3,813
Facebook Organic Post Reach	5,849	3,893	8,631
Newsletter Subscribers	34,966	35,136	35,207
LinkedIn Post Reach	9,642	7,711	10,499
Twitter Post Reach	5,299	3,097	3,781

❖ Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS)

VETS Director Jeremy Sinnemaki presented at the 2021 MakeMore Manufacturing Summit and the Miami Memorial Health Care Veteran Employer virtual training. Also, Director Sinnemaki and the VETS team attended the Florida Sheriffs Association summer conference in Naples. Also, the VETS team met with the Federal Communications Commission Commissioner Brendan Carr and Veterans Services - Learning Alliance Corporation in Orlando.

The VETS team continues contacting and assisting veterans who are looking for employment and training services. VF continues to provide services to veterans and employers amidst COVID-19.

❖ Career Services Program

The career services team is conducting employer training grant evaluations and contract renewals for fiscal year 2021-22. The team continues the work to expand both workforce grant employers and career matching opportunities to benefit our veterans. VF Development Manager Amy Entress presented at the Onward to Opportunity (O2O) Community-based service and support program virtual training. The team conducted the 2021 Veterans Florida Virtual Expo. In addition, the team also attended the Navy Tri-Base Job Fair in Jacksonville and the virtual 50strong SkillBridge Connect - Job Fair.

Veteran Leads Metrics				
Month	Grant Reimbursement Amount	Job Fair	Website	Total
July*	\$0	54**	113	167
August*	\$0	1	126	127
September	\$85,588.83	20	108	128
Total	\$85,588.83	75	347	422

* No grant requests were submitted in July and August.

** New leads as a result of the Expo (should be noted that existing leads and those active in our database were also attendees at the Expo).

❖ **Veteran Agriculture Program**

VF was awarded a federal three-year Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Program grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to conduct the Veterans Florida Agriculture Program. The Veterans Florida Agriculture Program is an immersive, hands-on six-month paid fellowship, and selected veterans study at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Research and Education Center.

Director Sinnemaki conducted a site visit at the UF/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center in Fort Pierce.

Research and Education Partnership Status				
Partners	Location	Pending	Active	Completed
Gulf Coast REC	Wimauma	1	1	0
Mid-Florida REC	Apopka	1	1	2
North Florida REC	Quincy	0	0	1
Fort Lauderdale REC	Davie	1	1	0
Tropical Aquaculture Lab	Ruskin	1	0	0
Tropical REC *New	Homestead	0	0	2

❖ **U.S. Department of Defense SkillBridge**

Veterans Florida continued to expand the DoD SkillBridge fellowship offerings with employers throughout the State of Florida to serve our transitioning active duty service members. Additionally, during the first quarter, VF partnered with the Florida Department of Corrections, offering an opportunity for corrections officers.

SkillBridge Partnership Status				
Partner	Location	Pending	Active	Completed
ARES Technical Services	Kennedy Space Center	2	0	0
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity	Statewide	1	0	0
Florida Highway Patrol	Statewide	8	4	0

❖ **Entrepreneurship Program**

The Entrepreneurship team collaborated with seven Florida Entrepreneurship Program partners to conduct various cohorts, workshops, and networking events. The new entrepreneurship partners are preparing for their fall offerings. The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is still open, and we continue to accept proposals for the fiscal year 2021-22 entrepreneurship services.

❖ **Board of Directors Meeting**

The Board of Directors approved the Board approved the Legislative objectives and current financial statements at the monthly meeting on September 30, in Tallahassee.

Partner	Purpose	Grant Amount	Date
Regions Bank	VETS Program	\$4,000	8/25/2021



NO FLORIDA VETERAN LEFT BEHIND

4) Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF)

The Foundation operates for the direct and indirect benefit for the veterans of Florida, the FDVA and State Veteran Service Organizations (VSO). FVF is a 501(C) (3) nonprofit operating for charitable and educational purposes. The Foundation operates solely on grants, donations and fundraisers. The Foundation operates with two full-time employee and one part-time intern.

❖ **Board of Directors, FVF Staff & Volunteer Outreach**

All FVF board of directors are volunteers who donate time and resources to support the Foundation’s mission and its programs to help veterans in need. Board Member Highlights: District 1A Director Mike Terhune provides free transport for fallen soldiers, via his Team Guardian Organization to their final resting place anywhere in the country. In addition to supporting the Foundation with funding and volunteer support, our Board Members also participate in raising funds for their local Veteran organizations on behalf of the foundation. During the first quarter alone, they raised over \$1,000,000 for Honor Flights, Memorial and Homeless Veterans.

Team Members	Hours	Events	Veterans Served
Board of Directors & Volunteers	3,854	112	3,251
New Volunteers	572		235
FVF Headquarters Staff Received Calls		10	1,056

Outreach Metrics	Reach	Followers
Facebook	339,501	16,136
Newsletter Subscribers	3,249	32.2%
Veteran Data Services	42,810	
Website Page Views	339,501	16,136

❖ **Incoming Grants, Fundraising and Donations**

Grants, Fundraising & Donations via Donations Webpage	First Quarter	YTD FY 2021-22
Corporate / Business Grants	\$56,300	\$56,300
Corporate / Individual Contributions	\$47,958	\$47,958
Agency Grants	\$21,000	\$21,000
Fundraising Events	\$21,300	\$21,300
Affiliated Organization Contributions	\$56,300	\$56,300
TOTAL	\$146,558	\$146,558

❖ **FVF Grants and Funds**

Revenue / Projections	Total	Amount
Incoming Grants Approved	2	\$40,000
Incoming Grants Pending Approval	6	\$147,000

❖ **Florida Veterans Support Crisis Hotline**

FVF continues its partnership with the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to support Suicide

Prevention, Opioid Addiction and Mental Health issues. The center attains approximately 12,000+ calls per quarter.

❖ **COVID-19 Project Relief Fund**

The Foundation has partnered with the American Legion of Florida and created the COVID-19 Project Relief Fund to help veterans affected by the pandemic with various needs.

❖ **FVF Outreach Programs**

YTD Veterans Assistance = \$30,582 July 1, 2021 thru September 30, 2021	
Veterans Homeless Shelter Programs	COVID-19 Project Vet Relief Fund
VA Pension Claims Assistance	Homeless Meals and other Assistance
Emergency Referral Services	Veterans Recognition Awards
Volunteer Recruitment Program	Emergency Shelter Assistance

❖ **Agging Wartime Veterans**

VA Pension - Aid & Attendance Financial Workshops Claim partners provided nine free seminars and received approvals for 517 Aids & Attendance Claims during the first quarter.

Forgotten Warrior Project Approved Year to Date	*267 Claims
Average Benefit Per Veteran Over 3 Years	\$51,200
Average Total Veteran Benefits Over 3 Years	\$13,670,400
Economic Impact	x 2.39
Total Amount with Economic Impact	\$32,672,256
<i>*Figures based on three-year life expectancy after claims approval.</i>	

❖ **Legacy of Service**

The Foundation signed a recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Sachs Media who has designed a “Legacy of Service” campaign to further the mission of the Foundation to help veterans in need. It is fully funded by outside sources who support the project through paid advertising.

❖ **Gadsden Flag License Plate**

The funds will help with recurring funding for foundation sustainability and continue its mission of helping veterans in need. The plate will go into production soon. FVF sold approximately 329 vouchers, FVF Marketing plan in on standby to sell 3,000 vouchers.

❖ **Volunteer Florida Grant (VFG)**

Ongoing grant to recruit and track 400+ volunteers, their hours and participation, etc. As of September 30, we have cataloged over 411 new volunteers on record who assist with the grant requirements and have logged in over 6,000 hours of volunteer work.

❖ **A State at War, Florida during WWII Documentary**

A new project in collaboration with 82 West Productions to produce a film on Florida during WWII explores the contributions Floridians made and their sacrifices that helped to win the war. FVF retains 10 percent of all monies for the project along with future DVDs and other sales.

❖ **Forward March Ambassadors for Veterans Council**

FVF recruited nine new Ambassadors to support the FVF with sustainable funding and extended outreach. A total of 32 Ambassadors serve at FVF as of September 30.

❖ **Get There Initiative for Veterans**

The FVF collaborated with Florida’s Workforce Education Initiative (FDOE), connecting veterans to resources at Florida’s twenty-eight State Colleges.

❖ **DHSMV Veterans Recognition Program**

The Foundation partnered with the Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to recognize those Troopers who are veterans and who went beyond the call of duty to help our citizens.



Summer Splash Fundraiser for Florida Veterans

❖ **Board Members and Staff Participated in the following Events:**

Veteran Treatment Courts	Veterans Council Meetings	PTSD Awareness Summits
Transport Fallen Veterans	Community Veterans Fundraise	Vietnam Veterans Bracelet
Veterans Task Force Seminars	Florida Veterans Council	Veterans Recognition Events
WWII Project Presentations	Homeless Vets Meal Deliveries	Flag Dedications
Burial & Memorial Services	Senior Veterans Events	FVF Board Meetings
Veterans Workforce Meetings	Virtual Networking Events	Veterans Transition Consulting
Veterans Graves Maintenance	Veterans Workshops	Veterans Death Transportation
Veterans Flag Presentations	HUD Vash Programs	Women Veterans Workshops
Veterans Recognition Events	Afghanistan Withdrawal Group	Veterans Claims Seminars
DAR & SAR Events	Gold Star Families Events	Veterans Day Ceremonies

Acknowledgement: FVF is grateful for FDVA’s partnership through the provisions of office space, administrative and legal collaboration efforts that helps to support FVF mission objectives.