

Veterans and Family Support

April 2025 Promotion

This month's topic is homeless veterans. I'm going to begin with some statistics. While numbers can vary depending on the source and over time, these statistics are still good indicators

- About 40,000 veterans are homeless every night
- While Veterans are about 7% of the general population, they represent nearly 13% of the homeless population
- Of those veterans that are homeless about 90% are men and 10% women

What are the major causes of homelessness among veterans?

- Disabilities and mental health conditions
- Substance abuse
- Family issues
- Lack of employment/poor living wages
- Lack of affordable housing
- Difficulties transitioning back to civilian life

What are some of the things we as an Auxiliary can do?

Veteran Stand Downs

Stand Downs are typically 1-3 day events that provide goods and services to homeless and at-risk Veterans. Things provided might include health screenings, dental, food, shelter, veterinary care, legal and DMV services, substance abuse, benefits and job counselling and wellbeing activities.

Most stand downs rely on volunteer help and donations.

- Perhaps your Auxiliary can donate to the event.
- You can encourage your members to sign up as a volunteer. Volunteer tasks are varied and include things like registering volunteers and veterans on the day of the event, helping with set up and take down, cooking, serving and cleaning up in the mess hall, distributing clothing and transporting veterans around the site.
- If you are a skilled professional such as a hairdresser/barber, dentist, chiropractor, veterinary, musician, artist, chaplain etc you may be able to volunteer for those specialty teams or help to recruit others in your profession to help.
- You can help to spread the word about upcoming Stand Downs in your community

I can say from experience that participating in these events is amazing and you will make many new friends and memories. The look on a veterans face when they are reunited with their dog after the dog has had a full medical check, the sometimes “toothless” grins of a veteran who no longer has toothache, the contentment on someone’s face when for a day or two they don’t have to worry about where the next meal or shelter is coming from – these are all things that stick with you and make you want to volunteer year after year. Best of all though, is when a participant one year, returns as a volunteer the next!

Here are just a few of the California Stand Downs that are already calendered:

- Spring Mini Sacramento Stand Down – 2nd May, 2025
- Placer County Stand Down – 6 May-8 May
- Antelope Valley – 17 May, 2025
- Stand Down on the Delta – 12 Sep-15 Sep, 2025
- Fall 2025 Sacramento Stand Down – 30 Sep-2 Oct, 2025
- North County Stand Down – 16 Oct-19 Oct
- Santa Barbara County Veterans Stand Down – 25 Oct, 2025

Transitional and Permanent Housing for Veterans

Transitional housing provides temporary shelter as Veterans transition from homelessness, an at-risk situation or from military service to civilian life. Many cities have non-profit organizations providing this type of accomodation.

There are also organizations that provide permanent housing for low-income and homeless veterans in addition to the services such as rental subsidies provided by HUD-VASH.

- These types of organizations are often looking for small items of furniture, bedding, small utensils, cleaning materials etc to equip new residents with everyday essentials.
- Many other community organizations, such as the Elks, have their own programs to provide goods for veterans entering new housing. If your Auxiliary doesn’t have enough resources itself, there may be an opportunity to partner with them.

And finally, just a reminder to keep your reports coming. The 2024-5 reporting year may have finished but the 2025-6 year has already started!