



Greene County Veterans Service Agency

Annual Report 2024

I. Introduction

The Greene County Veterans Service Agency provides essential support to veterans in our community, ensuring they have access to the benefits, services, and programs they deserve. We are committed to improving the lives of veterans through outreach, advocacy, and assistance with navigating state and federal benefits.

II. Mission:

Our mission is to honor, serve, and support the veterans of Greene County through advocacy, education, and access to benefits, while working collaboratively with other community organizations and government agencies to provide comprehensive services.

III. Services Provided:

The Greene County Veterans Service Agency provides a range of services designed to support veterans and their families in navigating benefits and accessing essential resources. These services include:

- **Claims Assistance:** Expert guidance on VA disability compensation, pensions, survivor benefits, and appeals
- **Benefits Counseling:** Assistance with VA healthcare enrollment, education benefits and other federal state and local veteran's programs.
- **Advocacy & Outreach:** Engaging with veterans to ensure they are informed and connected to available resources.
- **Cost-Free Medical Transportation:** Providing veterans with free transportation to medical appointments, ensuring access to the care they need.
- **Fresh Connect Checks:** Our agency began participating in the FreshConnect Program in 2022, directly issuing checks to veterans for use at participating farmers' markets. In 2024, we issued 2,500 FreshConnect checks, supporting access to fresh, locally grown produce and promoting healthy living.

IV. Programs & Events:

In addition to direct services, our agency is committed to honoring veterans and fostering community engagement through special programs and events:

- **Honor A Veteran (HAV) Ceremonies:** Each year, we host two HAV ceremonies—one recognizing a living veteran and another honoring a deceased veteran. These events serve as a tribute to their service and sacrifices, bringing the community together to express gratitude.
- **Ray Brooks Fishing Derby:** We organize a fishing derby for long-term care patients at the Albany Stratton VA Medical Center, offering veterans a recreational experience that promotes well-being and camaraderie. For 2025, we will be opening this event up to the veterans in all the Nursing Homes and Assisted living Facilities in Greene County.
- **Cards for Vets Program:** In 2022, our Agency launched Valentines for Veterans. The support from the community was overwhelming. Since then, we have grown the program to be a year-round initiative covering all major holidays to include, New Years, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Armed Forces Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas/Happy Holidays. For the months without an official holiday we go with a theme, such as Beach, Luau, or Patriotic.

V. Goals for 2025

Expanding Outreach and Community Engagement

Our top priority is increasing outreach to ensure that veterans across the county are aware of and can access the services available to them. To achieve this we will:

- Launch a Veterans Roundtable- A countywide initiative bringing together veterans, organizations, and community partners to foster engagement, strengthen collaboration, and coordinate efforts. This will help ensure that programs, events, and fundraisers align rather than overlap, allowing us to maximize impact while avoiding duplicate efforts.
- Explore opportunities for On-Site Presentations- Seek opportunities to connect with veterans in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, businesses and community organizations through scheduled presentations. These sessions will introduce veterans to available services and allow us to engage with those interested in further assistance.
- Presence at Community Events- Actively participating in resource fairs, local gatherings, and outreach initiatives to connect with veterans in accessible environments
- Strengthening our social media & Public Awareness Efforts- Enhancing our digital presence to better inform veterans and their families about benefits, services, and events.
- Collaborate with Local Veterans Organizations- Partnering with veteran groups to expand awareness and streamline effective efforts for greater community impact.

Streamlining Services Through the Human Service Merger

With our transition into the Human Services Department, we are working to improve interagency coordination to ensure veterans can more easily navigate available county services. This alignment allows for better collaboration between departments while maintaining our agency's core mission of serving veterans.

Merging Vet2Vet with County Operations

As of April 1, 2025, the County will take over our Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program, Vet2Vet of Greene County, ending our contract with the Hudson Valley Center for Veteran Reintegration. This transition will allow us to:

- **Expand Peer Support Programs:** Strengthening group meetings, social events, and other opportunities for veterans.
- **Enhance County Oversight and Coordination:** Ensuring the program aligns more closely with other veteran services for a more comprehensive support system.

Digitization and Paperless Transition

Continue eliminating unnecessary paper files, and to digitize the remaining sections of approximately 100 boxes of files.

VI. Conclusion

The Greene County Veterans Service Agency remains committed to supporting veterans and their families. As we move into 2025, we are focused on improving outreach, collaboration, and service coordination to better meet the needs of our veterans. We look forward to continuing our work with community partners to ensure that no veteran is left behind in the pursuit of their benefits and well-being.