



GREENE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision	1
Mission	1
Summary	1
Demographics	3
2021 Goals	3
Programs & Services	4
Administrative Organization	7
Administrative Expenses	8
Claims & Benefits	9
Statistical Reports	11
2022 Goals	15
Conclusion	16

VISION STATEMENT

Greene County Veterans Service Agency is dedicated to providing the highest quality of service to the Veterans and their families.

MISSION

- Educate Greene County Veterans and their eligible or advocating family members, about the various benefits Veterans have earned
- Represent and guide our Veterans and their eligibly family members, in obtaining benefits and services through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and other state, local, community, and private sources
- Make our Veterans an economic force through education, employment and business development

SUMMARY

Our Agency provided services to approximately 18,140 veterans, veteran family members and veteran advocates in 2021. (Figure 6, page 13) We saw roughly, a 40% increase in services or, about 8100 more contacts than 2020, despite COVID hours through March: this agency is non-essential, therefore operated at half-staff for the first quarter of 2021 with the exception of the Director; COVID protocols for our office space prohibited us from allowing walk-ins for simple services for the first half of the year, we terminated walk-in restrictions on June 7th fully resuming our open-door policy; additionally, the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in New York City and the co-located Department of New York American Legion Service Officers offices, in addition to the National Personnel Records Center were completely shut down through the entire year, with limited staff from those agencies working from home, leaving county veterans service agencies unassisted again for the majority of 2021; the VA Medical Centers also continued operating at limited capacity and only providing essential medical services for the majority of the year – some services have still not resumed into 2022; and, the estimated veteran population continues to decline in Greene County as it does statewide. Our full time staff for 2021 included our Director, one Veterans Benefits Representative, and one Senior Clerk. Additionally, we had

SUMMARY cont.

three (3) part-time Veterans Services Drivers, who provided medical transportation to over 400 veterans in 2021.

In 2021, we were ecstatic to host our first post-COVID Greene County Honor a Vet Veteran of the Year Award Ceremony since 2019, awarding that well-deserved honor to Thomas J. Andreassen of Leeds. Tom, as most know him, was a US Navy Seabee who served in combat in Vietnam, and is by far one of the most active members of our Greene County Veterans Community. We also submitted two successful Resolutions: the first declaring Greene County a Green Light for Military Service County, and coordinating an outdoor display of green lights on the County Office Building and the County Courthouse for the month of November, removing the Civil Service residency requirement for military members within their first year after transitioning from military to civilian life, who wish to relocate to Greene County. Additionally, we secured a promise of PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Project funding from New York State to implement our Greene County Vet2Vet Peer Support Dwyer, Program. Upon receiving this promise of funding, we initiated a contract with the Hudson Valley National Center for Veterans Reintegration, to create and manage Greene County Vet2Vet. In October, Director Deyo met with the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Denis McDonough as a member Congressman Antonio Delgado's 19th Congressional District Veterans Advisory Panel, to address a number of major concerns veterans have regarding access to VA Healthcare, non-VA Healthcare and subsequent billing concerns for seniors on Medicare who use the VA. We co-hosted a Veterans Resource Fair in Cairo, with New York State Senator Michelle Hinchey and the Cairo American Legion Post 983. We addressed New York State veterans and community supporters at the New York State Division of Veterans Services unveiling of the first Veterans Kiosk providing veterans' resource information to travelers at the New Baltimore Welcome Center, attended veterans breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, the Marine Corps Ball and the Military Ball, in Catskill, Cairo, Ashland, and Greenville. We attended the Veterans Day Ceremony in Palenville, and the Christmas Parade in Cairo.

All of our programs and services are provided directly through our agency; while, all benefits and payments received by our clients are provided directly from federal and state sources. The operating cost of this agency for 2021, was less than 1% of the total federal, health, education, pension, life insurance, and low income pension benefits received by Greene Veterans and their eligible family members from Federal Expenditures, of \$29,464,000. Additionally, this Agency came in 20% under budget for 2021, saving our taxpayers nearly \$80,000.00 from projected expenditures.

DEMOGRAPHICS

There are approximately 714,000 veterans in New York State, and approximately 3250 veterans, with a margin of error of 22% (census.gov) are estimated to live in Greene County. Notably, Department of Veterans Affairs Fiscal data and statistics reporting from October 1, 2020 through April 30, 2022 indicates 10,932 Greene County Military Veterans are receiving VA Disability Compensation, and an additional 497 Military Veterans are receiving the Low Income Veterans Non-Service Connected Disability Pension – indicating currently, that at least 11,429 (no margin of error provided) individuals who served in the US Military, reside in Greene County, New York; and, that number only indicates those receiving VA benefits. Statistics from Greene County Mental Health indicate that 11% of total patients treated at their facility, are individuals who have served in the US Military. In light of these statistics and the 22% margin of error advised by the 2020 US Census Report, the 2020 estimate of 3250 veterans is more likely than not, considerably lower than the actual number of US Military Veterans living in Greene County.

Based on projected US Census Data for 2021 alone, Greene County's total population only represents 0.25% of the total estimated New York State population; whereas, the number of veterans in Greene County to veterans in New York State, represent nearly twice that, or 0.45%. The veteran population density in Greene County is approximately 70 veterans per 1000 residents, which is among the highest in the state, as well as many other regions of the country.

The Agency goals for 2021 were:

- Continue eliminating unnecessary paper files
- Continue to digitize the remaining sections of approximately 13,000 existing paper files
- Continue to increase overall productivity, ensuring as many Greene County veterans as possible are aware of and obtaining their VA and other veterans benefits under our representation
- Continue to streamline interagency services, by coordinating with other local agencies and departments who refer clients
- Continue to partner with local businesses and the County Clerk in maintaining and expanding the Greene County Return the Favor Program

- Proudly honor two deserving veterans in our Honor a Vet Memorial and Veteran of the Year ceremonies

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- VA Disability Compensation Claim Representation
 - Represent veteran clients against the Department of Veterans Affairs in Disability Compensation claims
 - Provide guidance to veterans obtaining necessary medical evidence
 - Develop and submit each claim to American Legion Department Service Officer for review
 - Submit accepted claims to the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office for rating or approval
 - Interact with Congressional office to ensure all viable claims are accurately rated
- VA Educational Benefits
 - Assist veterans in obtaining their Certificate of Eligibility for the GI Bill
 - Assist eligible veterans' dependents in applying for Chapter 35 Survivor and Dependents Assistance for Education
 - Advise veterans of potential education benefits for self and dependents
 - Advise higher education institutions of CFR Title 38 Part III Chapters 30 through 36 regulations as necessary
- VA Pension Claim Representation
 - Represent eligible wartime veteran clients or their surviving spouses in VA Disability Pension claims
 - Assist veteran, family members and advocates in obtaining necessary financial information

PROGRAMS & SERVICES (CONT)

- Assist same in obtaining necessary medical information
- Develop and submit claims to American Legion Department Service Officer for review
- Submit accepted claims to the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office for approval
- VA Healthcare and Enrollment
 - Guide veterans through application process
 - Provide explanation of benefits
 - Assist veterans in disclosing their financials to the VA
 - Screen applicants for potential VA Disability Compensation claims
 - Assist veterans who were denied VA Healthcare
 - Help veterans navigate VA Healthcare benefits and billing
 - Advocate for veterans who are not receiving appropriate care at VA medical facilities
- County Veterans Transportation Program
 - Provide daily (weekday) transportation for county veterans to VA medical facilities
 - Pick up and drop off veterans at their homes
 - Provide transportation as requested for disability compensation assistance
 - Transport veterans after hours or weekends for special events as requested
 - Create and maintain eligibility requirements and standard operating procedure
 - Ensure vehicles, staff, and services meet all federal, state and local standards
- Events
 - Hold two Honor a Vet Ceremonies each year
 - One memorial ceremony in May for a chosen deceased veteran

PROGRAMS & SERVICES (CONT)

- One Veteran of the Year Ceremony in November for the chosen living veteran
- Supervise a nine member panel of committee members
- Create and disseminate submission packets annually
- Review and assess submissions for accuracy and eligibility
- Coordinate with Buildings and Grounds, Sheriff's Department, Catskill Police Department, and Greene County Courthouse for location set up and traffic control.
- Coordinate with local entertainers, clergy, and veterans service and other organizations to ensure each ceremony is tailored to the honoree and his/her local community
- Other Veterans Events
- Coordinate with Greene County Agencies and Departments
 - Coordinate with County Clerk's office in obtaining and submitting veterans discharge documents
 - Coordinate county's Return the Favor program, periodically canvassing local businesses to provide discounts to area veterans and/or update their existing offers with County Clerk's office who maintains accurate listing

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

Personnel

GCVSA Director	04/11/2011 to present
Veterans Benefits Representative	06/25/2018 to 02/14/2022
Senior Clerk	11/12/2019 to 06/10/2022
Veterans Services Driver – Part Time	08/30/2021 to present
Veterans Services Driver – Part Time	09/28/2020 to 06/13/2022
Veterans Services Driver – Per Diem	06/08/2020 to present
Veterans Services Driver – Full Time	Vacant
Honor a Veteran Committee Chairman	01/01/2004 to present

We had some beneficial changes in Administrative Organization, including the promotion of our original Veterans Benefits Representative to Deputy Director; which, though initiated in 2021 did not take effect until 2022 – we realized that our transportation program required its own manager to ensure reservations, staff scheduling, vehicle maintenance and repairs, and other programmatic details ran more smoothly. One of our longest-serving drivers “retired” to a per diem position in October. We thanked our outgoing Honor a Vet Committee Chairman, Samuel Mozzillo for completing two years of service, and welcomed our newly appointed Chairman Gordon Mosher, who will complete the next two years.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

COMPARATIVE OPERATING EXPENSES		
YEAR	2020	2021
SALARIES	\$150,919.02	\$173,909.54
LEASE	\$26,506.35	\$26,901.03
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$1,534.26	\$506.57
POSTAGE	\$93.80	\$139.99
REPAIRS	\$3,513.10	\$119.94
TRAVEL	\$7,235.98	\$10,272.56
OTHER PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$55,488.03	\$82,483.67
EVENTS	\$0.00	\$0
VEHICLE INSURANCE	\$2,580.33	\$2,596.44
IC/IT	\$2,604.69	2717.18
TOTAL	\$250,475.56	\$291,069.66
NYS REIMBURSEMENT	(\$10,000.00)	(\$8,000.00)
DONATIONS		
TOTAL OP COSTS	\$240,475.56	\$283,069.66

Figure 1

Notable increases in operational expenses are salaries, due to step promotions and annual raises; and travel expenses which encompass the fuel purchases for our transportation program, due to the rising cost of fuel. We receive Aid to Localities annually from New York State, and that aid was reduced by New York State, in 2021 across all counties citing COVID expenses.

CLAIMS & BENEFITS

Claims Filed Directly By Greene County Veterans Service Agency Staff

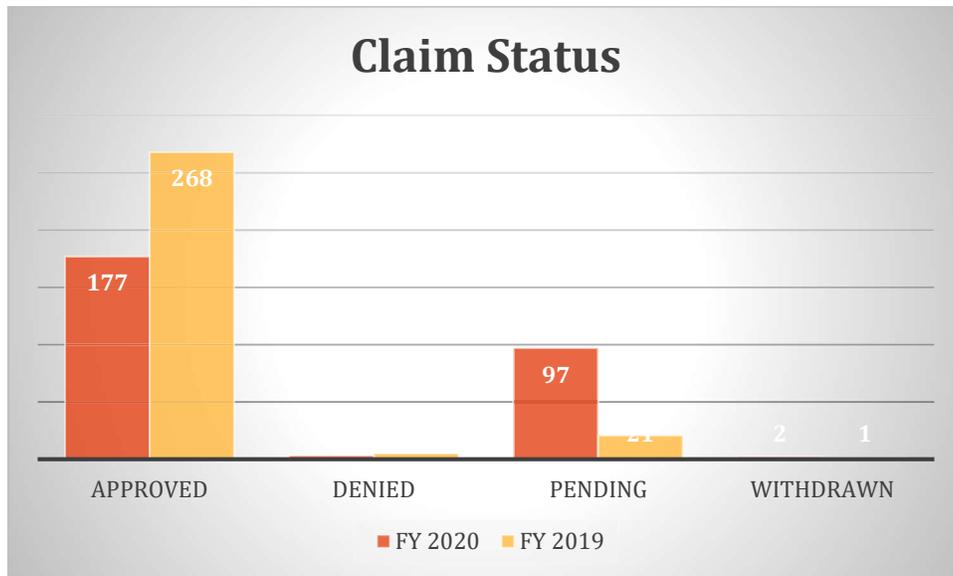


Figure 2

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Processing Centers shut down throughout most of 2021. This severely affected our ability to file VA Claims; and, this had also brought the claims processing to halt at the federal level, resulting in NEMR era delays in approval, further exacerbating the number of pending claims (claims our veterans filed that have not yet been decided by the VA) from 2019 to 2021; and, resulting in a 0% increase in the total VA Disability Compensation and Pension Expenditures the Greene County veterans. Figure 1 above demonstrates the 2019 to 2020 comparison; as, 2021 data is not available at this time.

CLAIMS & BENEFITS (CONT)

FY 20 & FY21 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES (IN\$000'S)

■ FY 20 ■ FY 21 GREENE

	FY 20	FY 21 GREENE
UNIQUE PATIENTS *	1,022	1,032
MEDICAL CARE	\$19,946	\$16,984
INSURANCE & INDEMNITIES	\$172	\$87
GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES		
LOAN GUARANTY		
EDUCATION & VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION/...	\$641	\$835
CONSTRUCTION		
COMPENSATION & PENSION	\$11,642	\$11,558
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$32,401	\$29,464
VETERAN POPULATION	3,322	3,250

Figure 3

Department of Veterans Affairs expenditures show a small deficit for 2021, almost entirely due to the 14% decrease in VA Healthcare spending, despite a small increase in the number of veterans using the VA Healthcare System from 2020 to 2021. This decrease is directly caused by the termination of services at the Albany Stratton VA Medical Center, citing COVID as the cause, most notably, the Adult Day Program which provides respite to caregivers of veterans with medical conditions such as Dementia. This program remains closed to date; with no projected timeframe to restart. The closure of this program affects our transportation ridership. In some respects, the decrease in healthcare expenditures may also be due to an increase in contracted care available to veterans. Insurance and Indemnities Expenditures and Education & Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures are variables that fluctuate based on veterans eligibility and personal decisions to use such benefits. Insurances and Indemnities are based on decisions made by veterans upon their separation from the US Military, and subsequent death – these are death benefits to beneficiaries. Education & Vocational Rehabilitation are also elective

CLAIMS & BENEFITS (CONT)

programs overseen directly by the college of attendance and the VA Benefits Administration. Overall, despite the drop in healthcare expenditures, we saw a successful year in the face of the ongoing COVID 19 Pandemic resulting in a 20% plus increase in total claims filed in 2021, and a projection of steady increase in Compensation Expenditures upon receipt of those 2021 Decisions. Pending claims are still elevated compared to pre-COVID rates.

FY2019 vs FY2018 VA Disability Compensation Recipients in Greene County

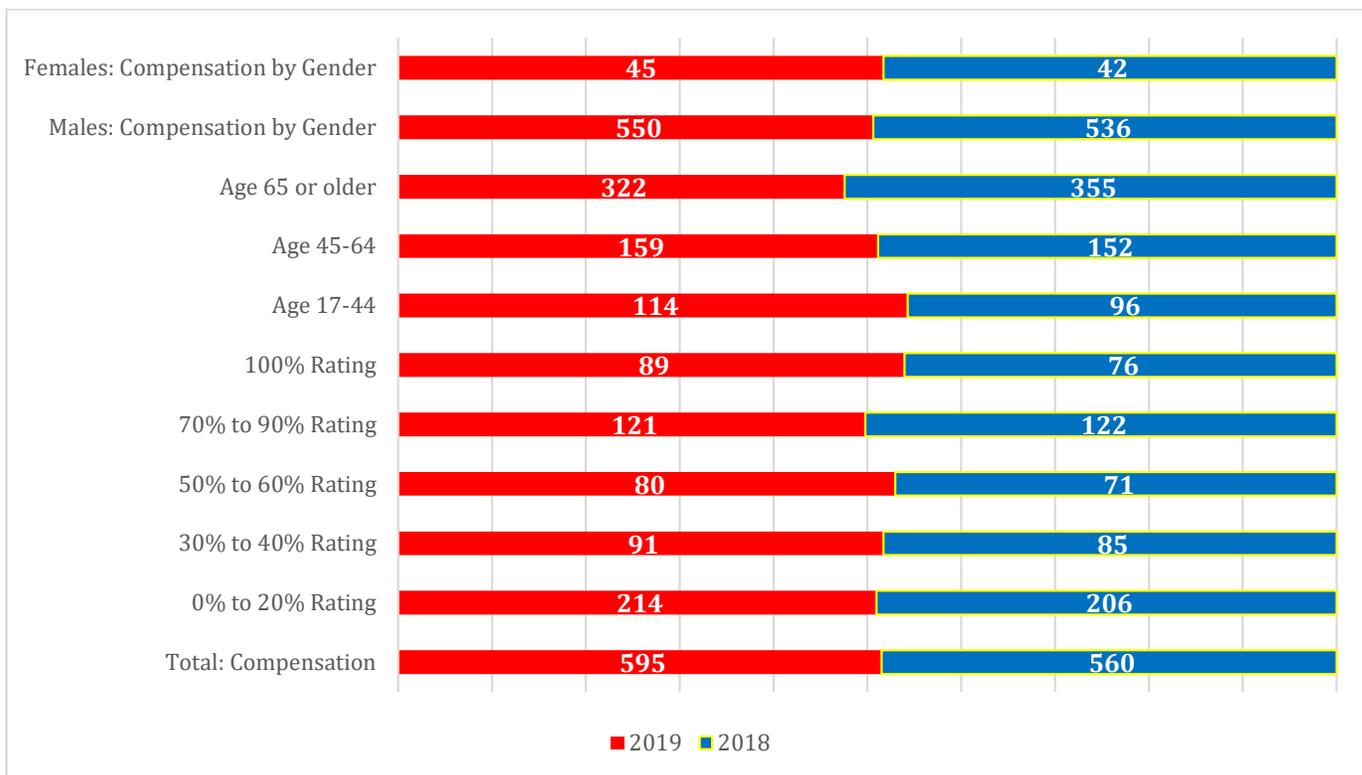


Figure 4

The demographical breakdown of VA Disability Compensation benefits is calculated by the Department of Veterans Affairs Data and Statistics Section. The newest information available is provided approximately 19 months after the close of each year. For this reason, the newest dataset available for this report is FY2019. Overall, the demographics may appear unremarkable; however, we saw a 6% increase in overall VA Disability Compensation

STATISTICAL REPORTS (cont)

recipients and a 15% increase in 100% ratings, with all but one other rating group increasing as well, between 2018 and 2019. A 100% service-connected single veteran without children received \$3,057.13 per month while the same with a spouse received \$3,227.58, and an additional \$84.69 per month per child under age 18, or \$273.58 per month per child between the ages of 18 and 23 who attend an approved education program.

The following information in Figure 5, was provided to us by the Department of Veterans Affairs Data and Statistics Analysis and Change Manager, at the New York Regional Office – this tableau describes a VA Fiscal year of October 1, 2020 through April 30, 2022 for all Greene County Veterans receiving Service-Connected Disability Compensation (Live Compensation – which indicates these are living veterans); Veterans receiving Non-Service-Connected Disability Pension (Live Pension – the same); and the surviving family members receiving both Death Indemnity Compensation (for spouses and dependents of veterans who died as a result of military service) and Survivor Pension (a low income disability pension for spouses and dependents of war-era veterans who meet certain edibility criteria).

Country	State	County Name	Benefits	Gross Amount	Count
United States	New York	GREENE	DIC - Death Indemnity Compensation	\$1,650,171	1,153
			Live Compensation	\$16,106,327	10,932
			Live Pension	\$435,694	497
			Survivor Pension	\$230,860	287
Grand Total				\$18,423,052	12,869

Figure 5

2021 TOTAL CONTACTS

Month	Total Client contacts	Total claims	ERA TOTALS							FEDERAL SERVICES										STATE SERVICES							OTHER	TOTALS		
			WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Persian Gulf	Afghan	Peacetime/other	Other	Comp	Pen	Health	Edu	Insur.	Home loan	Burial	Medal	Records	Gold Star	Blind annuity	Supplemental	Home Loan	Park Pass	Auto / fish license	Employment	State vets home	Medals		Property tax	other
Jan	410	55	4.1	16	139	77.9	115	57.4	410	148	66	160	9	2	8	54	5	111	0	4	3	7	3	2	2	1	4	13	29	631
Feb	445	75	4.5	18	151	84.6	125	62.3	445	161	72	174	9	2	9	58	5	121	0	5	3	8	3	3	4	1	4	14	32	688
Mar	457	0	4.6	18	155	86.8	128	63.98	457	165	74	179	10	2	9	60	5	124	0	5	3	8	3	3	4	1	4	14	32	705
Apr	693	45	6.9	28	236	132	194	97.02	693	250	111	271	14	3	13	91	7	188	0	7	4	12	4	5	5	2	6	21	49	1063
May	709		7.1	28	241	135	199	99.26	709	256	114	277	15	3	13	93	8	192	0	7	4	12	4	5	5	2	6	22	50	1088
Jun	654		6.5	26	222	124	183	91.56	654	236	105	256	14	2	12	86	7	177	0	6	4	11	4	4	5	2	6	20	46	1003
July	395		4	16	134	75.1	111	55.3	395	143	64	155	8	2	8	6	4	107	0	4	2	7	2	3	3	1	4	12	28	563
Aug	472		4.7	19	160	89.7	132	66.08	472	170	76	185	10	2	9	62	5	128	0	5	3	8	3	3	4	1	4	15	34	727
Sep	566		5.7	23	192	108	158	79.24	566	204	91	221	12	2	11	74	6	153	0	6	3	10	3	4	4	2	5	17	40	868
Oct	596		6	24	203	113	167	83.44	596	215	96	233	12	2	11	78	6	161	0	6	3	10	3	4	5	2	5	18	42	912
Nov	1170		12	47	398	222	328	163.8	1170	422	188	457	24	4	22	153	12	316	0	11	6	19	6	8	9	3	10	36	82	1788
Dec	606		6.1	24	206	115	170	84.84	606	219	97	237	13	2	11	79	7	164	0	6	4	10	4	4	5	2	5	19	43	931
Annual total	7173		72	287	2439	1363	2008	1004	7173	2589	1154	2805	150	28	136	894	77	1942	0	72	42	122	42	48	55	20	63	221	507	18140

Figure 6

STATISTICAL REPORTS (CONT)

TRANSPORTATION

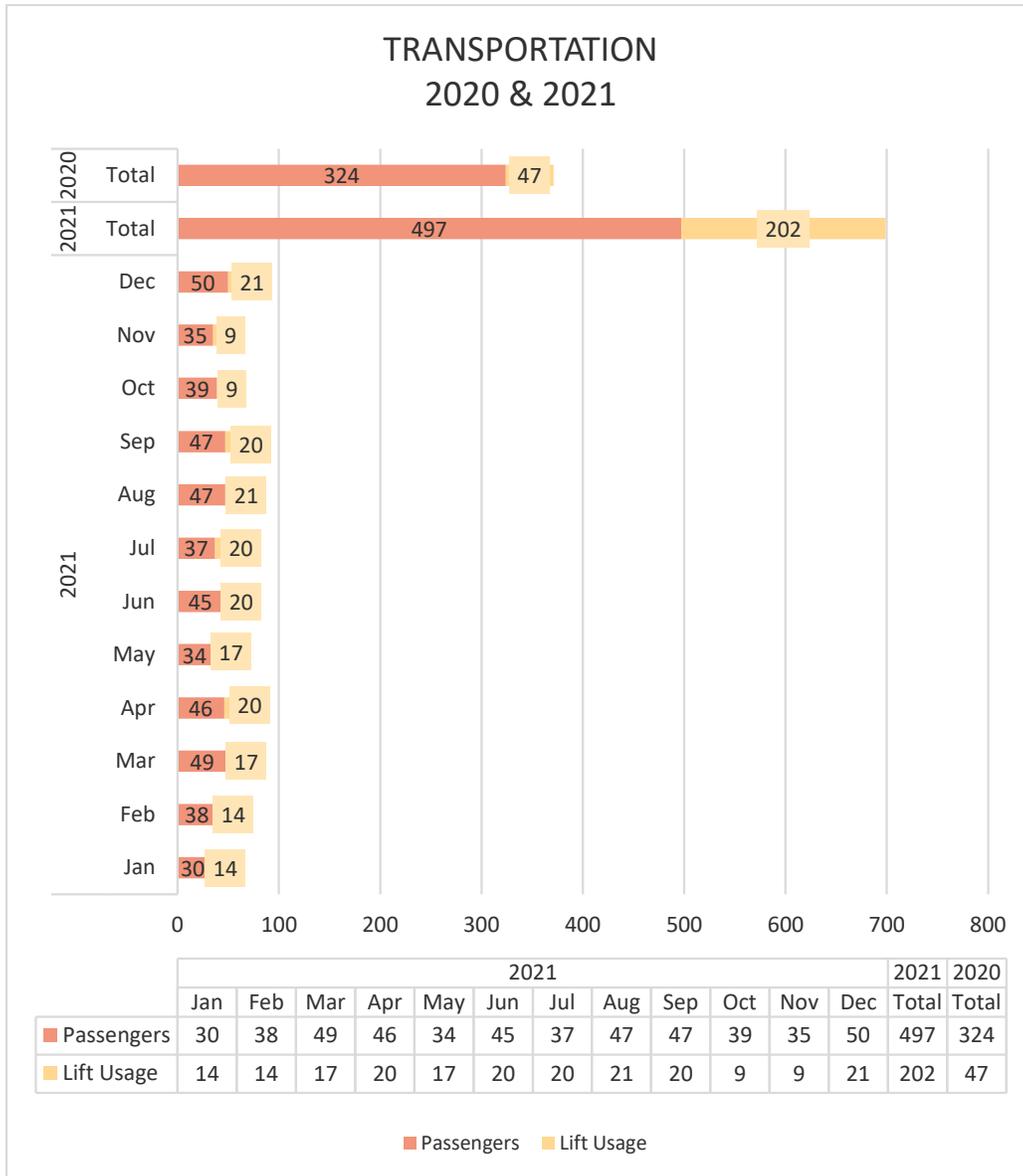


Figure 7

We maintain a fleet of three vehicles: 2006 Ford Focus, 2011 Chevy Van, and a 2016 Ford Transit Van with Wheelchair Lift. This service saw a steady increase in usage as the VA began seeing more patients as the COVID Pandemic began to wind down. We are still not seeing the usage rates we saw prior to COVID – this in part is due to programs that have not resumed, most notably, the VA Adult Day service that provides weekly respite to caregivers and quality medical and non-medical services to senior patients in need of meals, social programs, as well

STATISTICAL REPORTS (CONT)

as vitals and medication administration oversight and education. Additionally, the VA has been shifting to alternative treatment options, such as their innovative Telehealth Program, that allows patients to consult with physicians in the comfort of their own home.

EVENTS

COVID restrictions prevented us from hosting both of our Honor a Vet Ceremonies in 2020, as well as our May Ceremony – the Greene County Honor a Vet Memorial Ceremony. We were delighted when gathering restrictions were terminated, and the Honor a Vet Committee agreed to host the Greene County Honor a Vet Veteran of the Year Ceremony in November!

The Agency goals for 2022 are:

- Continue eliminating unnecessary paper files
- Continue to digitize the remaining sections of approximately 13,000 existing paper files
- Continue to increase overall productivity, ensuring as many Greene County veterans as possible are aware of and obtaining their VA and other veterans benefits under our representation
- Continue to streamline interagency services, by coordinating with other local agencies and departments who refer clients
- Continue to partner with local businesses and the County Clerk in maintaining and expanding the Greene County Return the Favor Program
- Proudly honor two deserving veterans in our Honor a Vet Memorial and Veteran of the Year ceremonies
- Continue to work with our elected officials and veterans service organizations to provide and facilitate access to resources to our veterans.
- Implement our PFC Joseph P Dwyer Vet2Vet Program

LONG TERM GOALS

- Continue to advise, support, and interact with our local Veterans Service Organizations
- Continue to advise and support our veterans in obtaining 100% compliance with the NYS Veterans School Tax Exemption; regardless of NYS reimbursement. Currently, only four out of ten school districts within or overlapping Greene County townships, have approved the exemption; we are advised on each status solely by members of the respective veterans' communities for each district.
- Encourage all towns in Greene County to participate in the Hometown Heroes Program
- Expand services to underserved areas of Greene County
- Encourage local veterans services providers across departments, to seek appropriate joint accommodations – a One Stop – for veterans to conveniently seek assistance without travelling from one location to another
- Continue to maintain an excellent standard for all services provided to our community's veterans, families, and advocates.

CONCLUSION

Though the beginning of 2021 was still a difficult and challenging year for Greene County Veterans Service Agency, as well as our Veterans Community, we continued to provide quality services to our veterans and their families while increasing our statistical productivity. We improved our online capability to file claims and check claims status. We saved \$80,000 from our projected operating costs, and our veterans did not experience any significant losses in VA cash disbursements despite the VA's claims backlogs. Though we saw some loss in medical expenditures, we actually had a gain in the number of veterans using the VA healthcare system – the decreased funding can be directly attributed to streamlining services. We will continue to strive to meet our annual and long-term goals, and as always, to grow and excel each year.