

**Veterans & Family Support Presentation  
Nelda Clifton | 2021-2022 National Ambassador**

Could you imagine not having a home – being on the streets?  
Foraging for food, asking for handouts just to eat?

**SLIDE CHANGE**

HOMELESS VETERANS –

**SLIDE CHANGE**

The slide with the following information is provided by Ryan Guina, Founder of The Military Wallet, a personal finance and benefits website for military members, veterans, and their families.

Studies show the veteran population is two times more likely to become chronically homeless than any other American group.

Contributing factors include long periods of unemployment, foreclosure, mental illness, and poverty.

Over 968,000 veterans lived in poverty last year, 76% of homeless veterans experience alcohol, drug, or mental illness issues, and 30% of veterans ages are 18-24 and unemployed.

Women veterans with children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless face much different barriers than homeless veterans without children. In fact, homeless and at risk veterans with children report the lack of childcare services impact their ability to receive the VA health care and job training services they need.

The VFW has urged Congress and VA to ensure homeless veterans have access to childcare when receiving health care and job training services.

Homeless veterans were also concerned with the lack of access to job training programs and counselors who understand the challenges of being homeless.

The VFW has urged Congress and VA to expand successful employment and peer-support programs to all homeless veterans to ensure they are able to obtain meaningful employment and stay off the streets.

*These statistics are unbelievable, right?*

**And unacceptable!**

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

This picture is of my own Auxiliary here in Missouri, donating housing goods to our local homeless veterans initiative, Veterans Community Project which has 49 “tiny homes” that house homeless veterans.

A few of these houses are for families.

I get very excited talking about this Kansas City Veterans Village!

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

Of course every state and city Veteran’s initiative for these Heroes and families are different, please just help as you can, where you can.

I don’t anticipate that any Auxiliary or members would go out on the streets to search for Homeless Veterans, but rather assist a Homeless Veteran program in your area.

My Auxiliary got involved with this project at the inception of the program.

The Founders of Veterans Community Project, all veterans themselves, were driving around in a pickup hauling a sample tiny home, trying to get more recognition and raise as much money as possible to make their dream come true.

*Well, they caught our attention – **BIG TIME.***

Through chicken fried steak dinners, golf tournaments, and other fundraisers, our Auxiliary was able to get the necessary \$10,000 (*at that time*), I'm sure with the price of lumber these days, it has increase significantly! to sponsor the very first home in the Veterans Village – ***in under 6 months!***

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

And we were so proud to have been able to house at least one veteran at a time, until they can be able to get back on their feet, and graduate from the program and to afford their own housing with a job that they have earned.

I am a proud supporter to help any- but I wish it could be all, homeless veterans.

The Veterans Community Project is quickly growing and in just under 6 years from the original idea – VCP is currently in the process of expanding in Longmont, Colorado; St. Louis, Missouri, and they are in discussions with a few other states.

I encourage any Auxiliary members in the locations they open to go and check out their program and their willingness to assist all veterans.

It may or may not be something your Auxiliary wishes to support, But at least check it out!

I could go on forever with this initiative, as it was my “special project” when I was Department President in 2017 – 2018.

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

Another way to get involved to assist homeless veterans is a local VA System sponsored Stand Down, which is typically a one – to three day event during which VA staff and volunteers provide food, clothing, and health screenings to homeless and at-risk veterans.

In addition, veterans also receive referrals for health care, housing solutions, employment, substance use treatment, mental health counseling and other essential services.

## **SLIDE CHANGE**

### **MILITARY AND FAMILY CAREGIVERS.**

Military Caregivers can now receive support assistance and services through the VA system.

## **SLIDE CHANGE**

But don't forget about the **FAMILY** part of this program's name. Remember the family members of a veteran with caregivers, as well as the caregivers of military. Caregivers come in many forms, it could be spouses, partners, parents, children, other family members, and even friends.

This touches my own life, as I am the primary caregiver of my mom, who was married to my father, who my eligibility came from, for 24 years before his death.

It is not so easy to get assistance in this capacity. Show them respect for caring for the ones who were left at home or loved our veterans after they returned.

According to [comfortkeepers.com](http://comfortkeepers.com) a caregiver works an average of 44.6 hours per week caring for their loved ones and 75% are female.

Information provided from the National Alliance for Caregiving, during the past year 65.7 million Americans (or 29% of the US adult population involving 31% of all US households) served as family caregivers for an ill or disabled relative.

A study conducted by the Stanford Center on Longevity and the Stanford University Psychology Department found that family caregivers – older ones especially – run the risk of poor well-being and

depression when they take on the job of caring for a severely ill loved one.

This may be because their social relationships suffer too, which are important for their well-being, and often experience social isolation and negative impacts to their emotional well-being. As well as putting their own needs and health on the backburner.

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

There are simple ways to show our support of the caregivers and acknowledge their importance. Caregivers often lose themselves in the care of others and stress levels rise, sometimes unnoticed, until it is overwhelming.

There are many more ways to show your support of the important position caregivers hold in their family member's life, some that are not on the screen include:

- Offer to sit with the veteran or family member while the caregiver goes grocery shopping.
- Offer to make lunch or dinner while you visit with them.
- Offer to help clean house or help do spring or fall cleaning.

There are numerous ways to volunteer that doesn't take money, think outside of the box, and come up with what is convenient for you and your Auxiliary members.

Don't forget the veteran or the family member themselves. Sometimes they need a break from their caretaker, *just as much as the caretaker from them.*

- Offer to read them a book.
- Help them with a jigsaw puzzle.
- Assist them in cutting out quilt pieces or sewing for them.
- Let them tell you about pictures in a photo album. Record them talking about their childhood memories to give to the caregiver.

- Let them teach you their hobby
- Play board games or pop some popcorn and watch a movie.

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

Besides a job well done and knowledge that we are fulfilling our goal of assisting Veterans and their Families -----

WHAT'S IN THIS FOR YOU AND YOUR AUXILIARY –

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

Award 1.

Most outstanding activity and or event that increases awareness of homeless veterans. A Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and or event to increase awareness of homeless veterans.

Criteria and entry form information is available in the National Program Book.

Award 2.

Most outstanding activity and or event that supports veteran, military, and family caregivers.

A Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and or event that supports veteran, military, and family caregivers.

Criteria and entry form information is available in the National Program Book

## VFW PROGRAMS:

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

And of course, the constants in the Veterans & Family Support Program are these listed.

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

**National Veterans Service** is our Service Officers that help in getting the veterans and family members their benefits and so much more.

VFW Service Officers are with America's veterans every step of the way once they're ready to file a claim. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer – free of charge – to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process.

**UNMET NEEDS** is there to help America's military families who have run into unexpected financial difficulties as a result of deployment or other military-related activity or injury. The program provides financial aid grants of up to \$1,500 dollars to assist with basic life needs in the form of a grant – *not a loan* – so no repayment is required.

To further ease the burden, the VFW UNMET NEEDS pays the creditor *directly*.

The applicant is the service member, veteran, or eligible dependent listed under the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System or (DEERS).

**MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM or (MAP)** Since 2005, MAP has sponsored events supporting more than *2.3 million service members and their families*.

A large part of MAP is the Adopt A Unit program, providing VFW Posts and Auxiliaries the opportunity to adopt hundreds of military units around the world.

Adopt A Unit's goal is to develop supportive relationships with units before, during, and after deployments to help deliver the vast network of resources the VFW has available to the military.

**MENTAL HEALTHY & SUICIDE AWARENESS** - A staggering 20 veterans commit suicide every day, and the VFW is committed to helping change the narrative and stigma surrounding military health in America.

In order to raise awareness, foster community engagement, improve research and provide intervention for those affected by invisible injuries and emotional stress, the VFW has teamed up with the nationwide organizations Give An Hour, the Campaign to Change Direction, One Mind, PatientsLikeMe, and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to combat this critical issue.

**VFW'S "SPORT CLIPS HELP A HERO SCHOLARSHIP"**

Scholarships of up to \$5,000 will be awarded to qualified applicants.

Awarded scholarships are limited to one per family per semester.

Applications for the fall semester will be accepted Jan 1 – April 30 and awarded in August.

Applications for the spring semester accepted Aug 1 – November 15 and awarded in January.

**WOMEN VETERANS** - Ensuring women veterans receive veterans' benefits and services that honor their brave military service is one of the VFW's top priorities.

Currently, women comprise 15 percent of the active-duty military and 18 percent of the Guard and Reserve.

With the steady increase of women wearing our nation's uniform and their increased role in military operations, it has never been more important that we ensure women veterans have a VA that is ready and able to care for them when they transition back to civilian life.

I hope everyone has a general knowledge of all of these shown on the slide. More information on the individual programs can be found at [vfw.org/assistance](http://vfw.org/assistance) for Unmet Needs, Student Veterans, and Mental Wellness [vfw.org/community](http://vfw.org/community) for information on Troop Support (MAP) and [vfw.org/advocacy](http://vfw.org/advocacy) for information for Women Veterans.

### **SLIDE CHANGE**

Now is the time to assist programs that benefit our homeless veterans and sometimes their entire families, as well as the caregivers to our veteran's family, along with our active duty and reserves.

Research in your area the best fit with your Auxiliaries or Departments to assist the forgotten heroes to the Veterans & Family Support programs. As always, keep yourself, your family, our Auxiliary Sisters and Brothers, and our veterans safe and healthy.