



GREENE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Prepared by: Michelle Deyo, Director

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VISION STATEMENT

Greene County Veterans Service Agency provides 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

In 2023, our Agency provided services to approximately 13,000 veterans, veteran family members, and veteran advocates. We observed an approximate 10% increase in services than in 2022. The number of Compensation and Pension claims filed by our office increased by 19.6% from 2022 to 2023, resulting in a total of 251 Compensation and Pension claims filed. Notably, there was a significant increase in federal expenditures for Greene County. These advancements occurred despite a reported decrease in the county's veteran population. These increments observed throughout the year underscore our Agency's strong commitment to supporting local veterans.

DEMOGRAPHICS

IN 2022, 580,856.0 VETERANS LIVED IN NEW YORK. THAT'S A 34.39% DECREASE SINCE 2012.

NEW YORK HAS THE 9TH-HIGHEST VETERAN POPULATION.

The Census Bureau's American Community Survey includes annual estimates of veterans. According to the Census Bureau, veterans are anyone who has previously served (regardless of the duration of service) in active duty in the armed forces. Relevant armed forces include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. People who served during World War II in the Merchant Marine are veterans, as is anyone in the National Guard or Reserves who has been on active duty. Veterans are not currently serving and are considered civilians.

Based on the data, the largest group of veterans in New York served in the Vietnam era.

Veteran population of New York

In 2022, 580,856.0 veterans lived in New York.

The Agency goals for 2023 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.
- 2023 was our 2nd year participating in New York State Agriculture and markets along with New York State Department of Veterans' Services Fresh Connect Checks Program. Our department issued 100 packets of \$50 each to local veterans.
- 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 resources for our veterans.

Awards / Recognition

On April 3, 2023, during Women’s History Month, Senator Michelle Hinchey awarded Woman of the Year to Greene County VSA Director Michelle Romalin Deyo.

Hinchey stated “It is my honor to recognize U.S. Air Force Veteran Michelle Romalin Deyo for her service to our country and tremendous advocacy on behalf of our veterans and first responders in Greene County. Michelle has served and protected our country with great courage, and upon returning home from military service, has devoted her life to supporting our veterans here at home, changing lives, and strengthening our communities in that work. Michelle makes history as the only woman to lead a county-wide veterans’ agency in SD-412, and the Legislative Women’s Caucus’ Women’s History Month recognition is the perfect opportunity to ensure that her legacy of service is rightfully acknowledged and celebrated.”



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.
- Assisted 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 an explanation of the 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.

Burial Claims

Assist Veteran family members with Burial reimbursement of funeral costs and submitting applications for burial plaques.

Help widows file for DIC- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, survivors' pension and/or Accrued benefits.

VA Home Loans

Assisted Veterans in filing for Certificate of Eligibility (COE) form. Home Loan applications, refinance restoration, interest rate reduction refinance or one-time restoration loan.

Fresh Connect Checks Program

Our Agency started being involved in the Fresh Connect Checks program in 2022. In 2023 was our 2nd successful year. We issued 100 packets each containing \$50 worth of Fresh Connect Checks.

County Veterans Transportation Program

Provide daily (weekday) transportation for county veterans to medical facilities.

Pick up and drop off veterans at their homes.

Provide transportation as requested for disability compensation assistance.

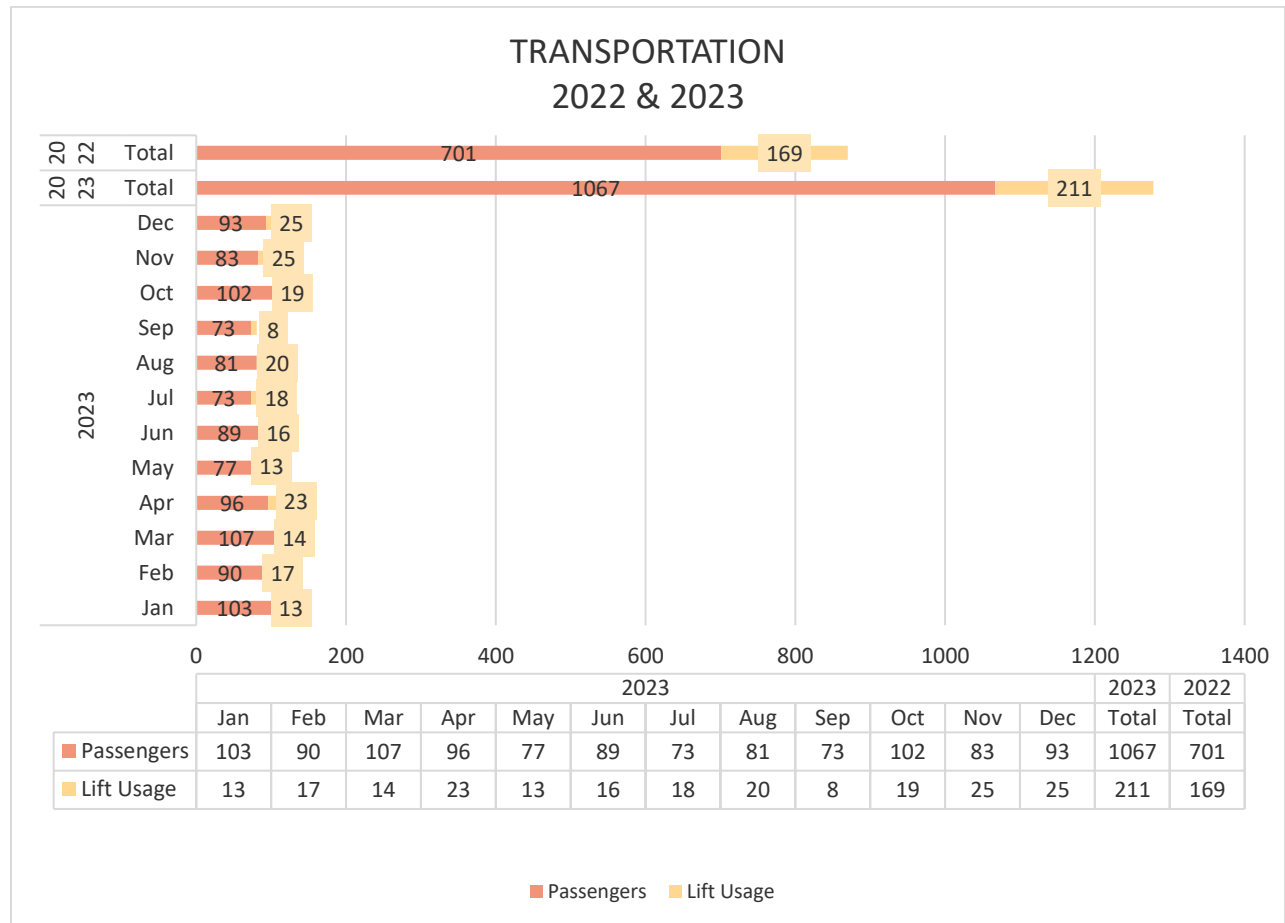
Transport veterans after hours or weekends for special events as requested.

Create and maintain eligibility requirements and standard operating procedure.

Ensure vehicles, staff, and services meet all federal, state, and local standards.

Provided transportation to and from Albany airport. Greene County veterans that were honored and chosen to go on The Leatherstocking Honor Flight.

TRANSPORTATION



We maintain a fleet of four vehicles: 2016 Ford Transit Van with Wheelchair Lift, 2017 Dodge Caravan, 2022 Ford Transit Connect Minivan and 2023 Ford Transit with wheelchair lift.

Events

Our agency holds two Honor a Vet Ceremonies each year.

- One memorial ceremony in May for a chosen deceased veteran.
- One Veteran of the Year Ceremony in November for the chosen living veteran.
- Supervise a 14-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.

We were privileged to continue the tradition of hosting both of our Greene County Honor a Veteran Ceremonies this year, celebrating the exceptional contributions of our nominees.

Honor a Veteran Memorial Ceremony in May 2023, paid tribute

to the commendable US Air Force Airman First Class John Irwin Cameron. John was born in Catskill NY, Raised in Coxsackie.

John entered the US Air Force, on August 13th, 1962, and on February 2nd, 1966, A1C Cameron gave his life in direct support of the Forward Air Control mission over Gia Dhin Province, Vietnam. A1C Cameron was flying as an observer OE-1E in an O-1 Birdog in support of the ARVAN Airborne. A1C Cameron's plane crashed, and he was killed in South Vietnam. A Hero, A1C Cameron you

will never be forgotten. A1C Cameron was awarded The Purple Heart, Air Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. A1C Cameron is Honored on the Vietnam Memorial Wall Panel 4E, Line 132.



Veteran of the Year 2023, our Agency proudly honored U.S. Army Enrico “Ed” Formica. In 1944 at the age of 18 Enrico Formica volunteered to be enlisted in the Armed Forces. He was deployed to France/Belgium and served in Germany with the 86th Division, 342nd Infantry Regiment. ETO European Theater of Operations April 28th, 1945. As the European Campaign came to a n end, he was immediately redeployed to the U.S. Then sent to the Philippines to serve in the Pacific Theater of Operations September 10th, 1945, and was stationed there for 12 months until his return home on September 30th, 1946. Enrico reached the rank of Communications Sergeant. He received The World War II Victory Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Philippine Independence Medal. Sgt. Formica was Honorably Discharged on December 25th, 1946.

The Walk for our Heroes

Our agency assisted with The Battle Within Foundation & Masonic Medical Research Institute event – The Walk for Our Heroes.

The Battle Within Foundation’s goal is to raise public awareness of the hidden trauma and depression (PTSD). A recent survey indicates that over 22 veterans are lost each day by suicide due to complications from wounds and scars not visible to the naked eye.

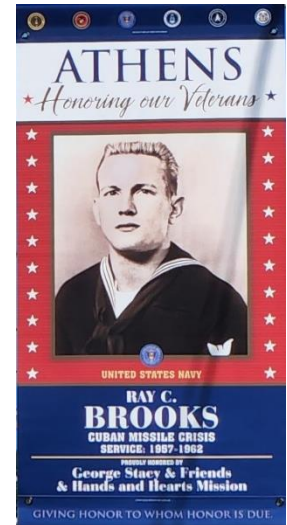
The event started on June 23rd through June 25th, 2023. One of our very own Greene County Veterans USMC Donnie Rion began his journey on the Walk of a total of 73 miles. Walking from Highland to Windham. The walk ended at the Mountain Lodge located at 5345 route 23 Windham where a reception and ceremony were held, welcoming the Marine and all who participated in the walk.



1st Annual Ray Brooks Fishing Derby & Luncheon

Our agency was given the honor to carry on a tradition that the late Ray Brooks held annually for the Albany VA Shriners Long term care veterans.

It was a great success, with very generous donations from local businesses. Donations were given by Black Horse Farms, Ginsberg's, Shoprite, Walmart, Price Chopper, Dollar Tree, Dollar General, Beer World, and Lacy's. The Greene County Legislators and our agency hosted about 20 long term care veterans along with 60 additional guests at the luncheon.

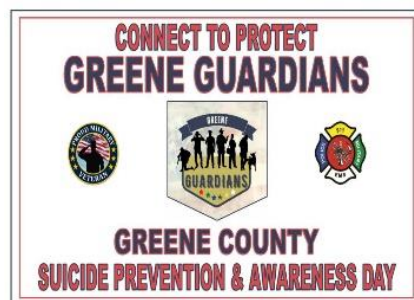


Connect to Protect Greene Guardians

In 2023, we successfully hosted our second annual “Connect to Protect Greene Guardians” event, with a primary focus on suicide awareness and prevention for some of our most vulnerable groups: Military, Veterans, and First Responders.

The event hosted over 30 vendors and several elected government officials.

With our unwavering commitment to eradicating suicide, we aim to continue organizing such events as long as the risk of suicide persists. The event raised over \$2000 in prizes and giveaways and collected over \$1000 in donations.



Veteran Resource Fair

- Resource Fair Location for 2023: Catskill Elks Lodge. Partnered with New York State Senator Hinchey and her team in hosting Veterans Resource Fair.
- Network with Federal, State, and local community partners in providing support and services to local veterans.



PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Funding / Greene County Vet2Vet

- Through the Joseph P. Dwyer state funding program, we have contracted with the Hudson Valley Center for Veterans Reintegration Organization to create our very own Greene County Vet2Vet program.
- The purpose of the program is to provide support, programs, and assistance to veterans reintegrating back into civilian life.
- Greene County Vet2Vet offers weekly peer to peer support veteran support groups, veteran and family peer support groups, a weekly coffee hour, weekly wellness walks, veteran and family breakfasts, veteran, and family bowling nights and much more.
- Coordinate with Greene County Agencies, Departments, and local partners.
- 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.

Adopt a Vet for the Holidays

Coordinated the 1st Annual Adopt a Vet for the Holidays.

The project was a great success thanks to Greene County employees and The Greenville American Legion Post. Their generosity is what made the project successful. 98 Veterans in Local Long term care Nursing homes were given gifts for the Holidays.



Cards for Vets

In 2022, our Agency launched Valentines for Veterans. The support from the community was overwhelming. It is now done year-round – Cards for Vets. 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.

Each month a flyer is created and shared on social media and emailed to all Greene County Staff. In 2023 our agency received over 4600 cards and small gifts, such as crossword books, coloring books, puzzle books as well as beautiful handmade crocheted items. Crocheted Hearts, Shamrocks, Flag pins and lap quilts/blankets. Many community members, organizations, and Greene County departments, donate such as the 4H Club, WAJL Golden Agers, The Shriners Group, Crafty Angels Group, Cairo Durham Elementary, Catskill Elementary Student Council, Maureen Murphy & Family, Kaaren Kiernan, Sherry from the District Attorney’s Office, The Greene County Sheriff’s Office, Greene County Public Health, just to name a few.



Leatherstocking Honor Flight

The Leatherstocking honor Flight Program is a non-profit, all volunteers, 501C3 member of The Honor Flight Network. The Leatherstocking Honor Flight, a hub of the National Honor Flight Network, recognizes American Veterans for their sacrifices and achievements by flying them to Washington, DC to experience their Memorial at no cost. Top priority is given to WW II Veterans and a terminally ill Veteran from any war. Applications are on a first come, first serve basis. A Guardian flies with the Veteran to ensure a safe and memorable experience. Please accept this “Trip of a Lifetime” as a small token of appreciation from all of us at Leatherstocking Honor Flight. Our Agency provided Greene County Veterans that were chosen, transportation to and from Albany airport. On April 29th, 2023, and on October 14th, 2023.



ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

Personnel

GCVSA Director	04/11/2011 to Present
Deputy Director	02/14/2022 to 8/29/23
Full-Time Veterans Benefits Rep.	11/4/2023 to Present
Part-Time Veteran Benefits Rep.	03/2021 to Present
Administrative Aide	12/19/2022 to Present
Veterans Services Driver—Part-Time	05/09/2022 to Present
Veterans Services Driver—Per Diem	06/08/2020 to Present
Veterans Services Driver—Full-Time	09/12/2022 to Present
Honor a Veteran Committee Chairman	01/01/2004 to Present

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

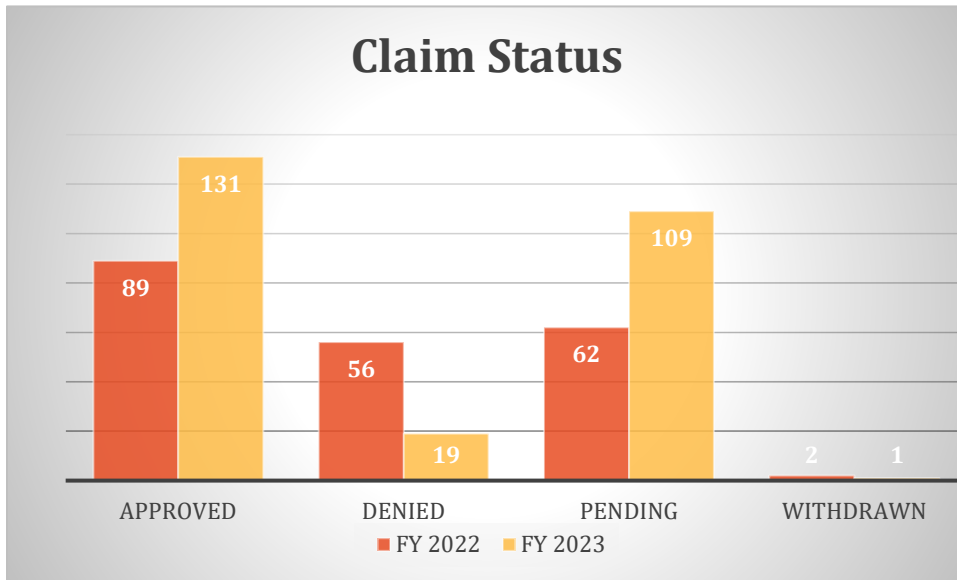
COMPARATIVE OPERATING EXPENSES		
YEAR	2023	2022
SALARIES	\$225,959.76	\$192,846.22
LEASE	\$27,702.57	\$27,297.78
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$6,401.54	\$3,585.04
POSTAGE	\$239.75	\$6,514.74
REPAIRS/CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT	\$0.00	\$222.33
TRAVEL	\$16,555.36	\$20,165.44
OTHER PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$88,869.77	\$79,802.57
EVENTS	\$3,993.69	\$0
VEHICLE INSURANCE	\$3,992.11	\$3,232.10
IC/IT	\$3,136.29	
TOTAL	\$427,890.84	\$333,666.22
NYS REIMBURSEMENT	(\$95,000.00)	(\$25,000.00)
DONATIONS	\$1,004.00	59,536.00
TOTAL OP COSTS	\$401,886.84	\$249,130.22

Figure 1

In the past year, our agency has experienced increased administrative expenses due to various factors. Notably, salary expenses increased because of promotions, step increases and annual raises.

CLAIMS & BENEFITS

Claims Filed Directly by Greene County Veterans Service Agency Staff **Figure 2**



The PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care and Compensation, for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras; however, we have observed an increased backlog in claim adjudication, with some claims still pending from 2022. Our Agency filed approximately 250 compensation and pension claims throughout 2023. Of these 250, approximately 52% of the claims submitted were approved while less than 8% of claims were denied. Due to the VA’s significant influx in compensation and pension claims across the US, a major backlog in claims processing from the VA has taken place. In 2023, approximately 40% of claims filed by our agency were pending VA review going into 2024. Figure 1 above demonstrates the 2022 to 2023 comparison.

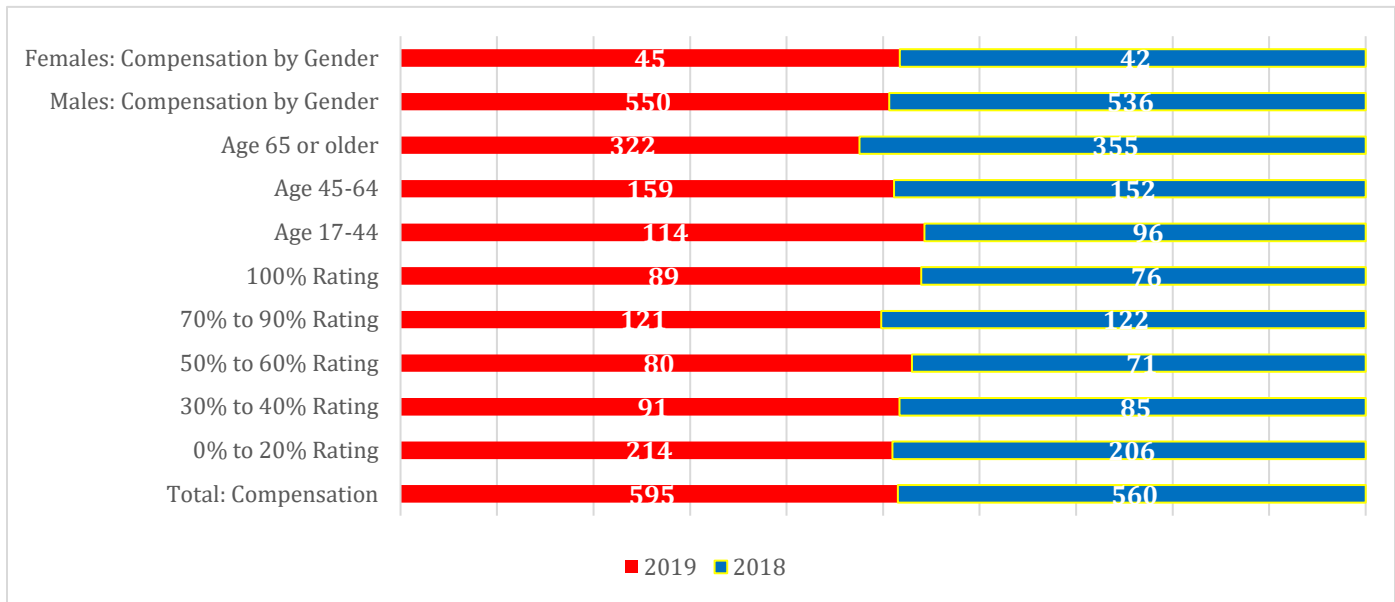
FY 20 & FY21 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES (IN\$000'S)

■ FY 23 ■ FY 22

	FY 23	FY 22
UNIQUE PATIENTS *	978	1,002
MEDICAL CARE	\$17,315,000	\$17,381,000
INSURANCE & INDEMNITIES	\$82,000	\$64,000
GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES		
LOAN GUARANTY		
EDUCATION & VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION/...	\$719,000	\$773,000
CONSTRUCTION		
COMPENSATION & PENSION	\$15,104,000	\$14,554,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$33,220,000	\$32,771,000
VETERAN POPULATION	3,009	3,129

Department of Veterans Affairs expenditures show an overall increase for 2023, entirely due to the 4% increase in VA Compensation and Pension spending, and despite a 0.4% decrease in VA Medical Expenditures, and a 7% decrease in veterans' utilization of education benefits, neither of which are directly attributed to the services provided by this agency; and, despite the VA's projected decrease in the overall veteran population across New York State, including Greene County. Insurance and Indemnities Expenditures and Education & Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures are variables that fluctuate based on veterans' eligibility and personal decisions to purchase or use such benefits. Insurances and Indemnities are based on decisions made by veterans upon their separation from the US Military, to purchase the VA's life insurance, and their subsequent death – these are death benefits to beneficiaries. Education & Vocational Rehabilitation are also elective programs overseen directly by the college of attendance and the VA Benefits Administration. Overall, we saw a successful year resulting in a 34% increase in total claims filed in 2022, and a projection of steady increase in Compensation Expenditures upon receipt of those 2022 Decisions. Pending claims are still elevated compared to pre-COVID rates.

FY2019 vs FY2018 VA Disability Compensation Recipients in Greene County



The demographic breakdown of VA Disability Compensation benefits is calculated by the Department of Veterans Affairs Data and Statistics Section. The newest information available for this report is FY2019. Overall, the demographics may appear unremarkable; however, we saw a 6% increase in overall VA Disability Compensation 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 table 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

THE AGENCY GOALS FOR 2024 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 veteran’s service organizations to provide and facilitate access to resources for our veterans.
- Continue the Cards for Vets project.

- Transportation for Greene County Veterans to and from Medical Appointments. Leatherstocking and Honor a Flight transportation to and from Albany Airport.
- Hold a 2nd Annual Ray Brooks Fishing Derby for Veterans from the Albany VA Shriners Long term care facility.
- Continue The Fresh Connect Checks Program. New York State Department of Veterans' Services and Agricultural and Markets- fresh food vouchers to be issued to Greene County Veterans.

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, seven out of ten school districts within and or overlapping Greene County townships, have approved the exemption. Cairo, Catskill, Greenville, Hunter, Onteora, Ravena, and Windham school districts. 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

The year 2023 marked a great year for the Greene County Veteran Service Agency. Not only were we able to provide exemplary service to our veterans, but we were able to expand our reach in the veteran community conducting outreach and hosting meaningful events. We improved our online capability to file claims and check claims status, which helped in more efficient and effective claims processing. We saved \$101,682.16 from our projected operating costs, and VA expenditures such as Medical and Compensation and Pension saw major increases. We will continue to strive to meet our annual and long-term goals, and as always, to grow and excel each year.