



Fiscal Year 2019

ANNUAL

REPORT

Mike DeWine
Governor

Deborah Ashenhurst
Director



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ohio is home to nearly 800,000 former service members – the sixth-largest population of veterans in the United States – and we work hard to be the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. The staff of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) takes pride in our active outreach to this unique and honorable group of Ohioans, actively identifying, connecting with, and advocating for veterans and their families. This report highlights our department's milestones during the past year.

Our work to serve our current veterans and to attract transitioning veterans to Ohio is achieved through collaboration with local and federal stakeholders alike. Our partnerships with the 88 County Veterans Service Offices, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other community organizations are essential

to ensuring Ohio connects veterans to the benefits and opportunities they earned.

There are many facets to the work we perform for the men and women we serve. The compassionate medical and support staff in our two Veterans Homes provide daily comfort and care; serving those who served with respect and dignity. The efforts of our Workforce team have reaped great benefits through active engagement with corporate partners to not only hire veterans, but to hire them at a level commiserate with their experience, and retain them through veteran-friendly policies and advocacy. Our work with Ohio's institutions of higher education ensures that veterans, military members and their families are able to fully utilize their GI Bill® benefits. The Department's grassroots effort to share the stories and successes of Ohio's veterans brings awareness of the tremendous contributions they bring to our communities throughout the state and shows the veterans how much we value them.

I appreciated the opportunity to testify before members of the General Assembly about our funding needs to support our Veterans Homes and initiatives. The most recent budget reflects the commitment of Governor DeWine and state legislators to those who sacrificed so much.

In my short tenure here, I have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of genuine appreciation for the service of this special group of Ohioans. I am honored to serve Governor DeWine, a true friend of those who wore the cloth of this nation. I have enjoyed the privilege of meeting with our veterans, military members and their families. From sharing their joys and celebrations to the tears of loss over the fallen, I treasure every interaction and look forward to leading the good work of ODVS in the upcoming year.

Sincerely,

Deborah Ashenhurst

Director, Ohio Department of Veterans Services

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EMPLOYMENT



The Veteran Workforce Team, consisting of our workforce consulting manager and two other regional workforce consultants, has been engaging Ohio's veteran-friendly employers. The team covers all 88 Ohio counties and provides direct services to employers seeking assistance in connecting with the veteran workforce system through OhioMeansJobs.com and in developing culturally competent veteran recruiting and retention strategies.

For FY2018, our regional workforce consultants contacted more than 2,600 employers leading to over 600 employer engagements. Those engagements include 81 employer training events with 1,104 attendees representing 587 employers around Ohio.

The team has now developed eight training modules for company human resources, recruiting, and management professionals. New this year is a presentation that covers "Managing Veterans," tailored to front line supervisors that interact daily with veterans. This training shares retention best practices and explains how to engage veterans in the workplace. All of these trainings are accredited by the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM).

Another additional tool added this year for the workforce team is the ability to deliver any presentation via an online webinar. This has been a popular choice among employers for the convenience and accessibility, all while still receiving free SHRM re-certification credits. To date, the team has conducted six online trainings, with over 75 employers and 120 attendees participating

We continue to receive great support from state partners, the Ohio National Guard, local chambers of commerce, universities, and community colleges, as well as the veteran community around the state, which regularly refer employers to our team, and we are greatly appreciative of that collaboration.

For more information on our workforce team, contact our Workforce Manager at 614-728-4866, or by email at Ryan.Blackburn@dvs.ohio.gov.



POST★9/11 GI BILL

It's Your Future

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services is the Ohio agency for the federally funded Veterans Educational Programs office, which oversees the State Approving Agency for Veterans Training. In federal FY2018, the VA spent more than \$281 million in Ohio on vocational rehabilitation and education, including more than \$105 million on tuition and fees through GI Bill®.

State Approving Agency

The principal role of the State Approving Agency is to promote and safeguard quality education and training programs for all veterans and dependents, and to ensure education and training opportunities meet the changing needs of veterans. There are more than 700 approved Ohio institutions where veterans and dependents are able to use their GI Bill® educational benefits.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) contractually requires the State Approving Agency to review these programs offered by institutions for validity and to perform 64 compliance surveys (audits) of institutions predetermined by the VA. These surveys acknowledge the reporting accuracy of tuition and fees schools make on behalf of the veteran.



TRAINING & STANDARDS



The Ohio Department of Veterans Services continues to train and certify Ohio county veterans commissioners and accredit county veterans service officers in all 88 counties. Online training was successfully launched in 2017 and six new courses were developed and added to the curriculum this year.

During FY2019, 34 newly appointed commissioners were trained on their duties and responsibilities per the Ohio Administrative Code. The Ohio State Association for County Veterans Service Officers trained 25 newly appointed officers. Additionally, 440 commissioners and over 270 officers were trained during several in-person training events during FY2019.

The department recertified the accreditation of 10 county veterans service officers with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and processed initial accreditation requests for 32 more officers. More than 149 cross-accreditation requests were processed with various veterans service organizations on behalf of service officers, allowing veterans to be represented by organizations of their choice during the claims process.



Veterans Affairs Regional Office

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services' liaison office at the Cleveland Veterans Affairs Regional Office provides direct assistance to the counties with claims that need immediate attention or special management through partnership with the Veterans Affairs Regional Office. The office staff provided assistance on over 4,500 requests from the county veterans service officers during FY2019. The office continues to partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, ensuring all systems-access issues that occur at the county level are addressed in an expeditious manner.

LEGISLATION



The Ohio Department of Veterans Services pursued a needed budgetary increase in 2019 in order to continue to operate both Veterans Homes at a high level. With support from Governor Mike DeWine and the General Assembly, the department is on track to receive necessary funds to continue to serve our wartime veterans who deserve our care and compassion at both the Sandusky and Georgetown Homes.

One area where the need for care continues to rise is at the memory care wards housed at both locations.

The increased need for care for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias has driven the department to invest in new memory-specific wards at the Sandusky and Georgetown locations as well as invest in staff and training. Both come at a significant cost that we are happy we can continue to invest in with the new state budget.

We also look forward to participating in a soon-to-be formed Alzheimer's and Dementia Task Force for all of Ohio. Upon passage of Senate Bill 24, the Director will designate a member of the department to participate in the newly formed task force as experts from across Ohio develop a statewide plan for addressing Alzheimer's and Dementia care, training, and research.



OHIO VETERANS HOMES



The Ohio Department of Veterans Services oversees two separate Ohio Veterans Homes – one located in northern Ohio in urban Sandusky and the other in southern Ohio and the more-rural setting of Georgetown.

The Sandusky home, which first opened in 1888 for Civil War veterans, includes a nursing home and a domiciliary. It is one of the largest such facilities in the country. The nursing home in Georgetown is much newer – it opened in 2003 – and is in a more isolated setting.

Each offers a quality of life which emphasizes privacy, encourages independence, provides comfort and security, and meets social needs. The Homes embrace a person-centered approach to caring for our residents. Both Homes and the domiciliary are open to honorably discharged veterans from periods of armed conflicts who are Ohio residents or were for at least one year during their lifetime.

Per-resident per diem funding by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, combined with a sliding scale resident assessment based on ability to pay, provides a long-term care value for veterans and their families.

During FY2019, the home in Sandusky had a bed capacity of 633 that broke down thusly: a combined 206 for the Domiciliary (independent care) and Domiciliary Plus (supervised care), 319 for Intermediate Nursing Care, and 108 for Memory Care (Alzheimer's/dementia).



The home in Georgetown had a bed capacity of 168 – 126 of which were used for Intermediate Nursing Care and 42 for Secure Care (Alzheimer's/dementia).

Contact information for the Ohio Veterans Homes:

Sandusky (419) 625-2454; Georgetown (937) 378-2900; www.ohioveteranshome.gov



VETERANS HALL OF FAME

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame recognizes the efforts of Ohio’s distinguished men and women who have worn the uniform of our nation’s armed forces and then continue to contribute to their communities, state, and nation through exceptional acts of volunteerism, advocacy, professional distinction, public service, and philanthropy.

The Class of 2018, inducted in November of that year, was chosen from among 119 nominations. The inductees, who range in age from 37 to 88, span 13 Ohio counties and four major branches of the United States Armed Forces – the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. This Class of 2018 joins 858 Ohio veterans who have been inducted and represent all eras, branches, and walks of life.

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame Executive Committee – comprised of veterans from throughout Ohio – reviews the nominations and selects up to 20 honorees annually. Honorees were recognized during the Induction Ceremony at Radiant Life Church in Dublin.

Dana Robinson-Street is the 2018 Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame Class Representative. As a medical provider and community advocate, Dr. Robinson-Street seeks to improve the lives of veterans from all eras of military service, conducts research on the challenges of America’s opioid crisis, and works to ensure that all veterans have access to services and benefits ensuring a healthy transition from military service.

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame bronze plaques for each class are on permanent display on the second floor of the Riffe Center for Government and the Arts at 77 S. High St. in downtown Columbus.



- Fredric L. Abrams, Air Force, Warren Co.
- Ronald L. Albers, Air Force, Franklin Co.
- Cassie B. Barlow, Air Force, Greene Co.
- *Francis Leroy Clendenen, Army, Licking Co.
- Dean Cooper, Army, Lawrence Co.
- Haraz N. Ghanbari, Army & Navy, Wood Co.
- James L. Gibson, Navy, Guernsey Co.
- Paul D. Haller, Navy, Jackson Co.
- Ronald J. Hartman, Army, Clermont Co.
- Joseph A. Machado, Army, Fairfield Co.
- Robert P. Milich, Air Force, Mahoning Co.
- *Charles L. Murray, Army, Franklin Co.
- Merle J. Pratt, Navy, Franklin Co.
- Fredrick L. Pumroy, Air Force, Greene Co.
- Clifford Riley, Army, Clermont Co.
- Dana L. Robinson-Street, Navy, Franklin Co.
- Ronald A. Schwachenwald, Army, Lorain Co.
- Douglas D. Theaker, Navy, Richland Co.
- E.J. Thomas, Air Force, Franklin Co.
- Robert J. Wilhelm, Marines, Guernsey Co.

**Awarded posthumously*



WOMEN VETERANS

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services strives to ensure that the voices of Ohio’s 67,000 women veterans are heard. In April, Director Deborah Ashenhurst appointed the 2019-2020 committee of engaged and knowledgeable women veterans to provide advice, counsel and input on issues, opportunities, and programs. This committee represents all branches of the armed forces.

In July 2018, Ohio Women Veterans were honored at Huntington Park in Columbus as the Columbus Clippers hosted Ohio Women Veterans Night.



In November 2018, two women veterans were inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame: Cassie Barlow, U.S. Air Force, Greene County; and Dana Robinson-Street, U.S. Navy, Franklin County.

In March 2019, ODVS and the Ohio Women Veterans

Advisory Committee celebrated Women’s History Month with a panel discussion at the Ohio History Connection. Moderators and panelists included Committee Chair Angela Beltz, Vice Chair Claudia Foss, Rebecca O’Connor, Nancy Schools, ODVS Director Ashenhurst, Barlow, and Robinson-Street.

Throughout the past year, the Committee has dedicated and volunteered time and resources toward the planning of the 2019 biennial Ohio Women Veterans Conference. The conference is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 10, 2019 at the Ohio Union on the campus of The Ohio State University. #SheServedToo is the theme and the focus is health, empowerment, and resiliency.



OUTREACH

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services constantly strives to connect with the veteran community, tell the stories of military members, and honor the men and women who have served our nation. A huge component of that effort is accomplished through various forms of outreach such as visits to VA facilities and County Veterans Service Offices, student veteran roundtable discussions, job fairs, county fairs, addresses at military signing events, and participation in the many ceremonies across the state that recognize the achievements of Ohio veterans.

Almost as soon as Maj. Gen. (U.S. Army, retired) Deborah Ashenhurst began to serve in her role as ODVS Director, she displayed her high energy and passion in travels all over the state to interact with community leaders, veterans, and military families.

From mid-January 2019 to the end of June alone, Director Ashenhurst attended dozens of events – many of them alongside Governor Mike DeWine. On Feb. 8, she joined the Governor in offering gratitude to Company B of the 638th Aviation Support Battalion at the Call to Duty Ceremony in North Canton, followed by a joint visit to the 179th Airlift Wing in Mansfield.

On March 29, National Vietnam War Veterans Day, the Governor and Director Ashenhurst combined forces again by honoring Vietnam-era vets at the Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky, thanking each resident on hand, and presenting them with a 50th Anniversary Commemorative Lapel Pin.





OUTREACH, CONT'D

On March 13, Director Ashenhurst spoke to a packed-in crowd at COSI as 326 young men and women confirmed their decision to serve at the 2nd Annual All-Ohio U.S. Armed Forces Career Commitment Celebration. Later in March, which is Women's History Month, the Director participated in several panel discussions to share the impact women have had on the military as well as the challenges they have faced.

The Director also was privileged to accompany Congressman Steve Stivers to President Trump's State of the Union address and festivities surrounding it. While there, she spent much of the day meeting with political leaders, dignitaries, and media members to bring light to the service, accomplishments, and difficulties of Ohio veterans.

Several of the in-state visits included the presence of state legislators and County Veterans Service Officers, who were enlightened of the value of veterans in the workplace. On May 7, for example, State Representative Laura Lanese joined ODVS in recognizing Spectrum in Columbus for its willingness to hire, incentivize, and retain veterans in its workforce. Director Ashenhurst did the same later that day at Hikma Pharmaceuticals. Both of those employer visits took place during Ohio's designated In-Demand Jobs Week.

During such events, the Director presents an OhioMeansJobs Challenge Coin to upper management and human resource directors as a show of gratitude for recognizing the unique and useful skill set of veterans. Former service members on hand, meanwhile, receive a department challenge coin.

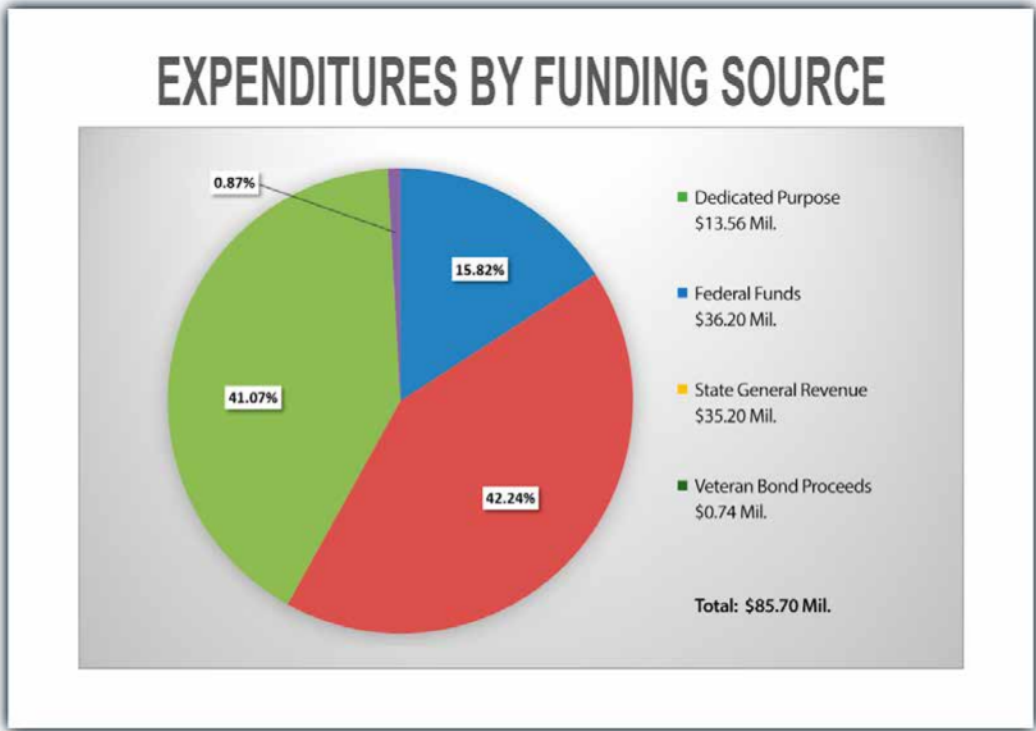
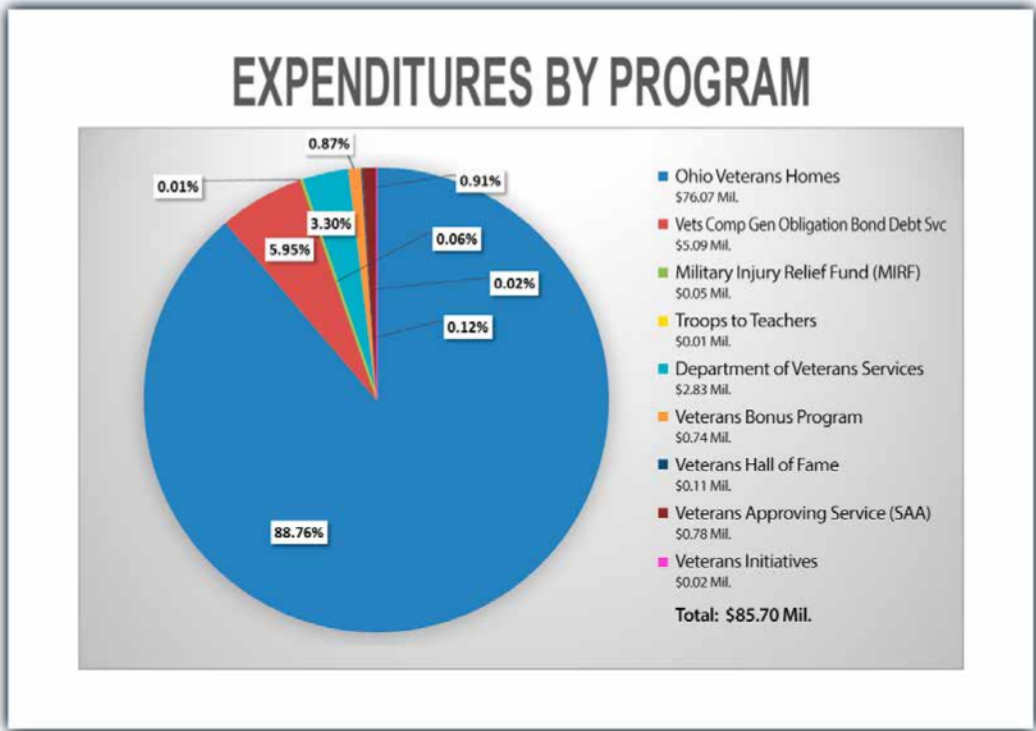
May 2019 arguably was the busiest month in department history in terms of out-of-office events, the most high-profile being the Governor's Wreath Laying at the Ohio Statehouse just days prior to Memorial Day, which pays tribute to Ohio's fallen and Gold Star families.

In the opening months of FY2019, department officials honored hundreds of veterans at the Ohio State Fair and several county fairs across the state.

At venues and gatherings large and small, ODVS places high value on interacting with the veteran community and saying "thank you" to our brave men and women of service.



ODVS EXPENDITURES





DIRECT FEDERAL SPENDING

