

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2014-15



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honoring those who served U.S.

Mike Prendergast, Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired, Executive Director

Salute to Excellence



Mark (AJ) Johnson
Supervisor
of the Year



Mike Fontenot
Staff Assistant of
the Year



Sherrel Pinson
Veterans' Claims
Examiner of the
Year
Claims Bureau



Louis Morales
Veterans' Claims
Examiner of the
Year
Field Services

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November 11, 2015

To: The Governor of the State of Florida, Members of the Cabinet, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives

I am deeply honored to submit the 2015 annual report for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. The report showcases the dedication, commitment and hard work of our stellar team of steadfast FDVA professionals and the unparalleled support we received from our partners at the federal level for Fiscal Year 2014 – 2015.



As I look back on the events of 2015, I am especially proud of our state's efforts to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. During the war, 16 million Americans served in uniform, including 248,000 from Florida. Many more Floridians served on the home front, from shipyards and factories to local USOs.

We partnered this year in an initiative called *Victory Florida*, to honor the selfless service of the nearly 100,000 World War II veterans who currently reside in the Sunshine State. We were happy to participate and add our agency's contribution to the historic narrative of the period.

With an initial budget of \$150,000, the State of Florida in 1945 recognized the need to provide services to returning service members and created a division within state government to connect veterans with their earned federal and state benefits. To better serve veterans and their families, Florida voters in 1988 overwhelmingly approved a Constitutional Amendment to create a Cabinet Agency to "Honor Those Who Served U.S."

Today, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is the premier point of entry for Florida veterans to access earned services, benefits and support. We serve the nation's third largest veterans' population with more than 1.5 million veterans residing in the Sunshine State.

FDVA plays a significant role in the direct infusion of more than \$15.7 billion annually for veterans into Florida's economy through federal compensation, education and pension benefits, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' medical services and military retired pay.

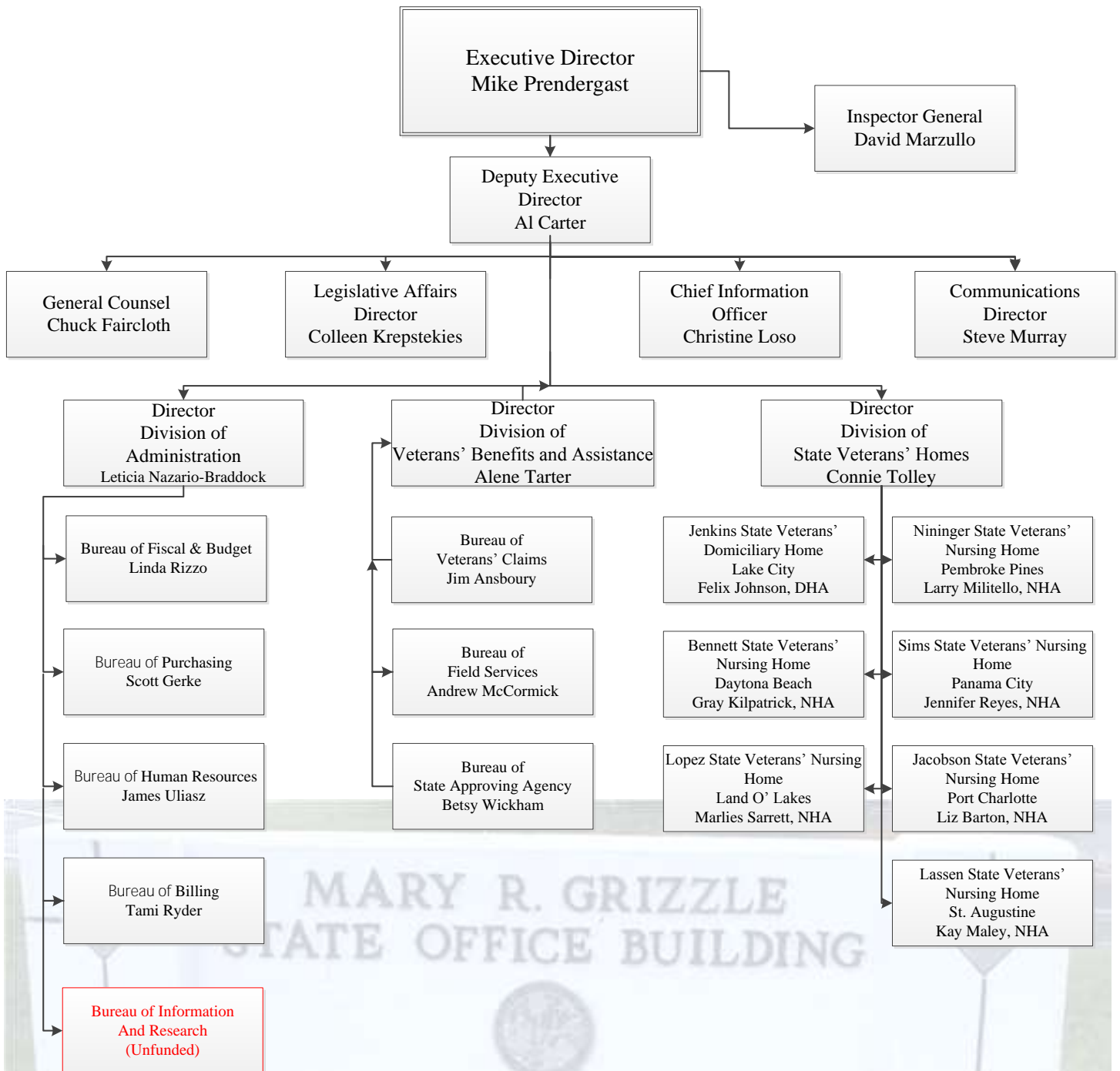
We believe increasing the quality of life for our veterans and their families through superior services, benefits and support is the noblest of callings. Florida offers unique benefits such as in-state tuition rates for veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, several layers of property tax exemptions, expanded veterans' preference, and extensive benefits, licensure and fee waivers for many activities and occupations.

Let us never forget our veterans, and their families, through whose selfless service and sacrifice we enjoy freedom and liberty. We honor their service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Prendergast".

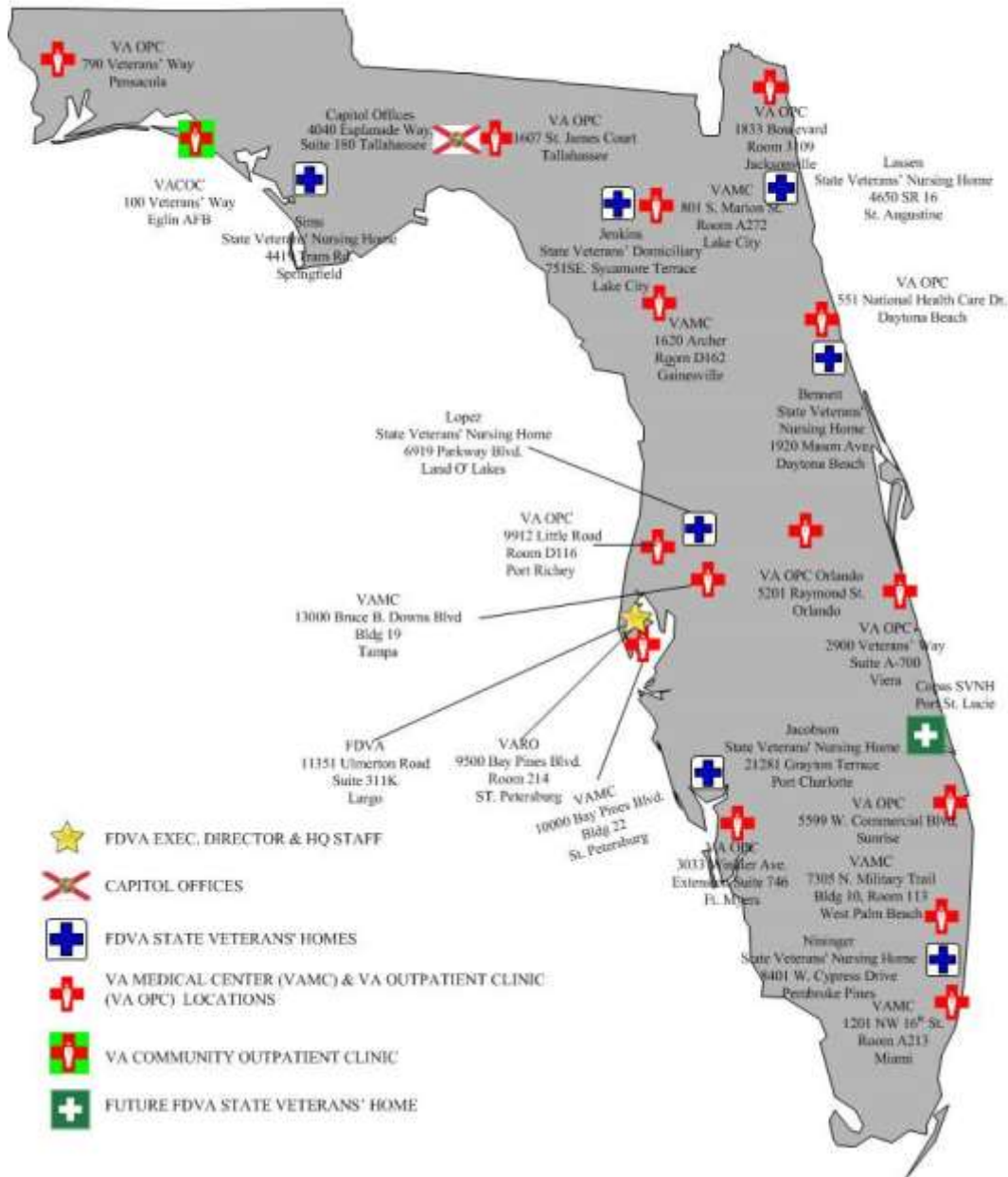
Mike Prendergast
Colonel, United States Army, Retired
Executive Director

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs



Our Mission: To advocate with purpose and passion for Florida veterans and link them to superior services, benefits and support.

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) Veterans' Assistance Locations

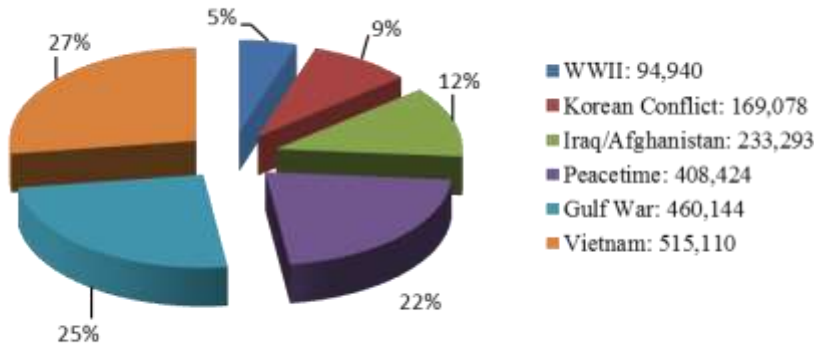


The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) is a Cabinet agency responsible for assisting Florida veterans, their families and survivors in improving their health and economic well-being through quality benefit information, advocacy, education and long-term health care.

FDVA's main administrative office is in Largo, with a satellite office in Tallahassee, and its two primary program areas are located throughout the state:

- **The Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance**, providing professional assistance to Florida veterans and their dependents in obtaining financial benefits and health care treatments from the VA;
- **The State Veterans' Homes**, providing comprehensive, high-quality health care to eligible veterans in need of long-term skilled or assisted living care.

Florida Veterans by Service Era



Note: Includes veterans who served in more than one conflict.

Who We Serve



1LT Ruby Fischer
(Lassen SVNH)
WWII 94,940 (5%)

In the 1940's WWII veterans were among the nation's first to participate in modern warfare. Their service also coincided with major advances in modern medicine, resulting in a then extraordinary survival rate.



SFC William Probst
(Bennett SVNH)
Korean 169,078 (9%)

As these veterans have aged, benefits and services that address a variety of issues unique to their demographic, including the changing health risks and long neglected mental health needs, financial challenges and long-term care needs are being implemented.



Capt. Colleen Krepstekies
Legislative/Cabinet Affairs Director
Iraq/Afghanistan 233,293 (12%)

While more veterans are returning home from battle, that also means that more veterans are learning to live with catastrophic conditions that previous generations never before had to face. Research suggests that 10% to 18% of these troops are likely to have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after they return.



1LT Lois Jones
(Lopez SVNH)
Peacetime 408,424 (22%)

Almost a quarter of the Florida's veteran population served honorably during a very unique and relatively conflict free time in our history. Many of these veterans do not seek benefits, mistakenly believing that if they did not serve in combat, then they must not qualify for veteran benefits and programs.



SMSgt Erik Dupree
FDVA Veterans' Claim Examiner
Gulf War I 460,144 (25%)

Urban warfare has changed not only the face of war, but also what our veterans face after the war. With advances in technology and medicine, more service members are surviving injuries incurred in war that would have killed them in previous eras.



MSgt John Milam
(Sims SVNH)
Vietnam 515,110 (27%)

Forty years after the end of the Vietnam War, the agency has seen a heavy increase in disability claims filed on behalf of Vietnam veterans due to triggered responses to the current wars and the manifestation of acute diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange.

Performance Measures

MEASURE	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Actual	2014-15 Standard
<i>Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance: Provide information and advocacy to Florida veterans, their families and survivors, and assist them in obtaining all federal and state benefits due to them.</i>			
1. Value of cost avoidance because of retroactive compensation.	\$174,022,538	\$134,633,014	\$84,992,852
2. Value of cost avoidance because of issue resolution.	\$56,445,394	\$62,226,091	\$20,423,288
3. Number of veterans served.	110,405	105,839	91,559
4. Number of claims processed.	28,597	32,816	20,959
5. Number of services to veterans.	620,808	696,679	455,993

MEASURE	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Actual	2014-15 Standard
<i>Division of State Veterans' Homes: Provide quality long-term healthcare services to eligible Florida veterans.</i>			
1. Occupancy rate for homes in operation 2 years or longer.	97.8%	98.9%	90%
2. Percent of state veterans' homes in compliance with quality of care health care regulations.	100%	100%	100%
3. Number of state veterans' homes beds available.	869	870	869

MEASURE	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Actual	2014-15 Standard
<i>Division of Executive Direction and Support Services: Provide effective and responsive management to support the divisions and programs serving veterans.</i>			
1. Administration costs as a percent of total agency costs.	4.64%	3.37%	6.8%
2. Administrative positions as a percent of total agency positions.	2.4%	2.5%	4.4%

Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance

The Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance provides professional assistance to Florida's veterans and their dependents in an effort to obtain financial benefits and health care treatment from the USDVA. Success is measured by the number of veterans the department assists and the number of issues resolved for those veterans. "Assistance" is seen in a variety of components, including medical treatment, prescriptions, prosthetic devices, benefit checks, school program approval, veterans' preference investigations and determinations, voter registration, and disseminating veteran data to the public.


The Division is comprised of a Division Director, support staff, and three Bureaus: Bureau of Veterans' Claims and Assistance, Bureau of Field Services and Bureau of State Approving Agency. Also, included within the Bureau of Veterans' Claims is Veterans' Preference.

The Division's Veterans' Claims Examiners (VCEs) are trained in the myriad of issues facing veterans who served in World War II through today's conflicts, with each era having unique issues and challenges. Each day finds VCEs offering assistance and guidance at Transition Assistance Program briefings for separating service members, congressional veterans' appreciation days, Homeless Veteran Stand Downs, and veteran service organization gatherings. We are proactive in our services to Florida's veterans, yet of the 1.5 million veterans in Florida, fewer than 300,000 currently receive VA service-connected compensation and pension benefits (not to be confused with military retirement benefits.) Efforts to reach these veterans, counsel them regarding benefits they may have earned, and assist them in garnering those benefits are expanding. For every state dollar expended for this division, more than \$128 of federal monies are brought into Florida.

The Bureau of Veterans' Field Services provides benefits counseling services to inpatients and outpatients in 31 of the USDVA's medical facilities in Florida and State Veterans' Homes, as well as outreach activities for FDVA throughout the state. Field Services also assists in staffing the state's Disaster Recovery Centers when established by the Division of Emergency Management. The Bureau's primary responsibility is to help veterans initiate, develop, submit, and prosecute claims and appeals for state and federal veteran benefits. The focus of Field Services is face-to-face contact with the client and the resolution of any number of issues related to the submission of claims for compensation, pension, or medical care.

The VCEs of the Bureau of Veterans' Field Services work closely with patient advocates in VA Medical Centers. They also perform extensive outreach, and help veterans navigate the confusing and cumbersome process to obtain benefits from the USDVA. The services can result in monetary benefits, but often result in determining, verifying, and obtaining eligibility for medical treatments, medications, wheelchairs, hearing aids, ambulance bill reimbursements, lost check replacements prosthetics, and other, non-monetary--yet valuable--benefits within the VA system. This service provides Florida veterans with significant economic value.

State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*,
<https://floridamemory.com/items/show/161478>



The Bureau of Veterans' Claims Services provides counseling and assistance to veterans, their dependents and survivors, with the preparation, submission, and prosecution of claims and appeals for state and federal benefits as well as applications to correct military records. The bureau also supports the VA's initiatives of Homeless Outreach, Women Veterans' Integration, and 'Fully Developed Claims' program.

The Bureau's primary responsibility is to work directly with the decision resources in the USDVA Regional Office to expedite claims and to influence, through proactive advocacy, the most positive outcome. To this end, Veterans' Claims Services provides a quality control function by reviewing completed USDVA benefits rating decisions and paralegal due process assistance in the prosecution of veterans' disagreements with and appeals of USDVA rating decisions and debt identification and relief.

The Bureau is also charged by statute to train and certify County Veterans Service Officers. To maintain proficiency with the rapid changes in veterans' programs, the bureau provides training twice a year during the counties' semi-annual conferences.

The Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Training (State Approving Agency/SAA) SAA is charged under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code (USC), and the federal contract entered into between FDVA and the USDVA and governed by Section 295.124, F.S. This Bureau is 100% federally funded. The Bureau reviews, evaluates, and approves programs of veterans' education at Florida's institutions of higher learning and non-college degree schools for participation in VA Education Benefit programs. GI Bill-eligible veteran flight training and employer On-the-Job and apprenticeship training also fall under the SAA's purview.

Education is one of the keys to the successful transition from active-duty to veteran status. Certifying quality programs in the state, and encouraging the use of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for those programs, is emphasized in all FDVA outreach activities. Attracting and keeping a young, educated veteran population is good for all of Florida.

State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <https://floridamemory.com/items/show/161478>

Division of State Veterans' Homes

The State Veterans' Homes Program provides comprehensive, high-quality health care on a cost-effective basis to eligible veterans in need of either long-term skilled nursing care or assisted living services. Care is provided to veterans with qualifying war or peacetime service, who are residents of Florida preceding admission, and who require skilled care as certified by a USDVA physician. Admission criteria are based on the need to maintain a safe environment for all residents. The skilled nursing and assisted living homes only admit those veterans whose needs can be met within the accommodations and services it provides with consideration for all residents.



A touching moment on 4th of July.

Assisted Living level care is provided at the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City, and includes rehabilitative assistance and other therapeutic measures to eligible ambulatory veterans who are not in need of hospitalization or skilled nursing services. The focus of care in the Domiciliary Home is preparing veterans to function at their highest level of independence. A multidisciplinary approach is followed with the veterans participating in the established care plan.

Skilled nursing home care provides full-service, long-term residential nursing care to eligible veterans in the six State Veterans' Nursing Homes. The homes are supervised 24-hours daily by registered and licensed nurses. Five of the six skilled nursing facilities operated by FDVA have dementia-specific wings. FDVA operates nursing homes in Daytona Beach, Land O' Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte and St. Augustine.

Comprehensive services and a deep concern for all veterans go hand in hand at our FDVA nursing homes. Around-the-clock medical and nursing care is provided by a full-time staff of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants. Rehabilitative services, such as occupational and physical therapies, speech therapy, and recreational activities are provided under the direct supervision of licensed therapists. A variety of on- and off-site recreational and social activities are provided to encourage active minds, bodies, and spirits, and slow the process of physical and mental decline. A wide range of other medical services is also offered. These include dental, podiatric, and dermatological care. In spacious dining rooms, residents are provided with wholesome meals prepared under the supervision of licensed dietitians. The State Veterans' Home Program has a proud tradition of concern and commitment to the veterans. We remain at the forefront in ensuring that the level of care and services provided to our veterans meets or exceeds the highest standards in an environment that enhances the quality of life of each veteran.



Governor Rick Scott with Executive Director Mike Prendergast presenting the Governor's Veterans Service Medal Award to each resident in their home. Residents look forward to this special honor with the Governor.

Note: Detailed individual facility reports are included as Appendices.

State Veterans' Homes Program Occupancy Rates

During Fiscal Year 2014-2015 the average occupancy rate for State Veterans' Homes in operation two years or longer was 98.7%. Assisted living facilities traditionally operate at a lower occupancy than skilled nursing facilities, and the department is proud to announce the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City brought their occupancy rate above the 90% performance measure goal for the first time since they opened in 1990.

Quality of Care

CMS enhanced its Nursing Home Compare public reporting site to include a set of quality ratings for each nursing home that participates in Medicare or Medicaid. The ratings take the form of several individual ratings and one overall comprehensive rating for each home, five stars being the highest and one star being the lowest. Overall ratings of five stars place a facility at the top ten percent of all rated facilities in their state. The primary goal of the rating system is to provide residents and their families with an easy way to understand the assessment of nursing home quality, making meaningful distinctions between high and low performing nursing homes.

FDVA is excited to announce that five of our six skilled nursing facilities have been recognized with this five star rating (Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte, Land O' Lakes, and St. Augustine.) The remaining one has been rated at three stars (Daytona Beach.) We are proud of the quality of care provided to our residents, in a warm, caring home-like atmosphere.

The State Veterans' Homes have made significant progress in standardizing clinical standards and procedures, resulting in residents receiving thorough consistent care. Continuity of care is of the utmost importance when caring for the elderly. At each of the Homes there is an emphasis on providing the same care givers (RNs, LPNs, and CNAs) on a daily basis. Providing consistent caregivers affords the resident and caregiver the opportunity to establish a strong bond, resulting in outstanding outcomes. The relationships between caregiver and resident become very special over a period of time.



Residents participate in the Annual Fishing Trip on the St. John's River sponsored by the Elk's Lodge



Residents enjoy the Summer Bash Blast Off party complete with 400 water balloons, squirt guns and lots of laughter!

Department Recognitions



The department's outreach and branding campaign received the Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in February 2015. (See image) The award for best state practice was presented by VA Secretary Bob McDonald to FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray and FDVA Deputy Executive Director Al Carter at the 2015 Mid-Winter Conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C.



The Prudential Productivity Awards are made possible through the generosity of Prudential, and the vision of the late J. E. Davis and A. D. Davis, co-founders of Florida TaxWatch. Since 1989 Florida TaxWatch has publically recognized and rewarded state employees and work units whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.

In Fiscal Year 2014-15, FDVA was honored to be recognized by the awards committee, with two work units being recognized as Prudential Productivity Award winners:

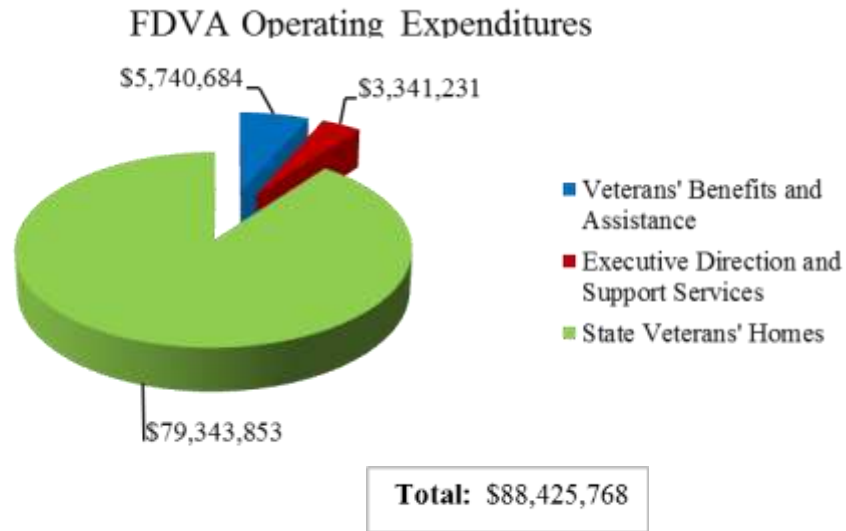
- ⇒ **FDVA Governor's Veterans Service Award Team**
- ⇒ **FDVA Homes Program-Activities Volunteers**



The Governor's Gold Seal Award program was established in 2002, and developed and implemented by the Governor's Panel on Excellence in Long-Term Care, composed of persons appointed by the Governor's Office, Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Health, Department of Elder Affairs, Florida Association of Homes for the Aging, Florida Health Care Association, Florida Life Care Residents Association, and the State Long Term Care Ombudsman. Gold Seal recipients must demonstrate a long standing quality of excellence, with over 30 months of data and surveys scrutinized. They must meet a quality of care scoring and ranking placing them in the top ten percent of their region or top fifteen percent in the state as well as be a 5-star facility in the CMS Nursing Home Guide. The Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City has been recognized as such a home of distinction. FDVA is proud that the care we offer our veteran residents, and the caring environment we provide. Our homes are truly 'home' for these men and women.



Our Fiscal Impact



See Appendix VII for detailed fiscal information.



Actions Taken Relevant to Florida Statutes

§ 292.05(4), F.S. *The Department may apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services from the state, the United States Government or any of its agencies, or any other public or private source and may use funds derived from these sources to defray clerical and administrative costs as may be necessary for carrying out its duties.*

State Approving for Veterans' Training

FDVA maintains a contract with the USDVA to provide for State Approving for Veterans' Training. Costs are reimbursed 100% by the USDVA and include coverage of clerical and administrative expenses of the Bureau.

State Veterans' Homes

The State Veterans' Domiciliary and Nursing Homes operated by this department apply for and receive federal funds from the USDVA for per diem as well as construction and renovation grants. The Homes also accept funds from Medicare/Medicaid, Hospice, private insurance, and individual residents in the form of co-payments for services rendered. The Homes also accept cash donations as well as gifted items and services for the benefit of the residents.

§ 292.05(5), F.S. *The Department shall conduct an ongoing study on the problems and needs of those residents of this state who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and the problems and needs of their dependents. The study shall include but not be limited to:*

- *A survey of existing state and federal programs available for such persons that specifies the extent to which such programs presently are being implemented, with recommendations for the improved implementation, extension or improvement of such programs.*
- *A survey of the needs of such persons in the areas of social services, health care, education and employment, and any other areas of determined need, with recommendations regarding federal, state and community services that would meet those needs.*
- *A survey of federal, state, public and private moneys available that could be used to defray the costs of state or community services needed for such persons.*

FDVA continually surveys its constituency through feedback garnered while counseling thousands of veterans, receipt of training critiques, participation on numerous veteran-related governmental committees, regular meetings with veterans' organizations and their leadership, and as possible analyses of official USDVA data and reports. The Bureau of Information and Research, intended by the legislature to perform this task full time, has never been funded. FDVA regularly attends Florida Veterans Council meetings with veteran service organization representatives throughout the state as a best-effort to not only gather information on veterans and their needs, but to disseminate information on available benefits to as many veterans as we can reach.

§ 292.05(7), F.S. *The Department shall administer this chapter and shall have the authority and responsibility to apply for and administer any federal programs and develop and coordinate such state programs as may be beneficial to the particular interests of the veterans of this state.*

State Approving for Veterans’ Training

Under the provisions of Title 38 USC, and the contract maintained between the FDVA and the USDVA, State Approving for Veterans’ Training is charged with inspecting, approving and supervising programs and courses offered by accredited and non-accredited educational institutions (public and private). A list of such educational institutions and specific courses which it has approved is furnished to the USDVA Regional Office at Bay Pines so that eligible veterans or other eligible persons enrolled in such courses may receive veterans’ education benefits.

State Veterans’ Homes Program

The Department operates the State Veterans’ Domiciliary Home in Lake City, and State Veterans’ Nursing Homes in Daytona Beach, Land O’ Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte, and St. Augustine. The Homes’ Program may apply to receive federal funds that provide for the needed facility renovations and monthly per diem for eligible residents for the cost of care.

The total number of beds currently available in the State Veterans’ Homes Program is 870. Of those, 720 are nursing home beds. The veteran population over 65 years old in Florida is estimated to be 785,255 according to USDVA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration reported Florida has a total of 83,395 nursing home beds and an over-65 population total of more than 3.5 million. Florida Department of Elder Affairs estimates more than half a million Alzheimer’s or related dementias patients in Florida. The current population demonstrates a on going need for more beds. The construction of new State Veterans’ Nursing Homes is subject to approval by the Governor and Cabinet, with 35% of the funding provided by the Florida legislature and 65% of construction costs matched by the USDVA.

Veterans’ Preference in Hiring and Retention

§ 295.07, F.S. provide that the state and political subdivisions accord preferences in appointment, retention, and promotion to eligible veterans. § 295.11, F.S. tasks FDVA, upon written request of any eligible person, to investigate complaints alleging violation of veterans’ preference rights.

FDVA continues to evaluate the trends and conditions that are evolving in our state. Adjustments to FDVA’s long-range plans are made to better meet the needs of Florida’s veteran population.



County Population and Federal Benefit Distributions

FY14 Summary of Expenditures by State Expenditures in \$000s						
County/ Congressional District	Veteran Population*	Total Expenditure	Compensation & Pension	Education & Vocational Rehabilitation/ Employment	Insurance & Indemnities	Medical Care
ALACHUA	18,537	\$ 222,473	\$ 66,753	\$ 14,202	\$ 1,465	\$ 140,053
BAKER	2,756	\$ 14,958	\$ 6,166	\$ 589	\$ 63	\$ 8,141
BAY	23,335	\$ 152,469	\$ 108,009	\$ 13,532	\$ 1,762	\$ 29,166
BRADFORD	4,112	\$ 24,575	\$ 8,374	\$ 721	\$ 91	\$ 15,388
BREVARD	67,059	\$ 500,433	\$ 296,321	\$ 40,034	\$ 7,845	\$ 156,232
BROWARD	86,935	\$ 609,052	\$ 288,950	\$ 74,674	\$ 8,198	\$ 237,230
CALHOUN	1,265	\$ 7,636	\$ 4,162	\$ 293	\$ 43	\$ 3,138
CHARLOTTE	20,878	\$ 125,209	\$ 73,986	\$ 3,821	\$ 1,674	\$ 45,728
CITRUS	27,757	\$ 140,042	\$ 68,667	\$ 3,709	\$ 1,047	\$ 66,619
CLAY	30,076	\$ 189,904	\$ 107,188	\$ 31,256	\$ 2,478	\$ 48,982
COLLIER	28,996	\$ 98,537	\$ 59,030	\$ 5,711	\$ 3,628	\$ 30,167
COLUMBIA	8,157	\$ 113,386	\$ 34,409	\$ 1,967	\$ 622	\$ 76,387
DE SOTO	2,492	\$ 14,313	\$ 7,774	\$ 310	\$ 56	\$ 6,174
DIXIE	1,655	\$ 20,101	\$ 6,539	\$ 129	\$ 40	\$ 13,393
DUVAL	98,861	\$ 581,943	\$ 293,264	\$ 111,248	\$ 6,418	\$ 171,013
ESCAMBIA	41,789	\$ 279,726	\$ 176,837	\$ 29,330	\$ 3,847	\$ 69,712
FLAGLER	12,537	\$ 67,535	\$ 37,290	\$ 5,580	\$ 966	\$ 23,698
FRANKLIN	1,507	\$ 6,605	\$ 3,613	\$ 115	\$ 18	\$ 2,859
GADSDEN	3,898	\$ 25,744	\$ 12,312	\$ 1,577	\$ 219	\$ 11,635
GILCHRIST	1,655	\$ 16,292	\$ 6,504	\$ 458	\$ 42	\$ 9,287
GLADES	1,069	\$ 5,638	\$ 1,841	\$ 128	\$ 43	\$ 3,627
GULF	1,791	\$ 9,301	\$ 6,049	\$ 415	\$ 52	\$ 2,785
HAMILTON	1,287	\$ 11,618	\$ 5,157	\$ 348	\$ 76	\$ 6,038
HARDEE	1,587	\$ 9,463	\$ 4,300	\$ 314	\$ 149	\$ 4,700
HENDRY	1,935	\$ 13,293	\$ 6,847	\$ 656	\$ 68	\$ 5,723
HERNANDO	22,672	\$ 171,283	\$ 91,193	\$ 7,685	\$ 1,082	\$ 71,323
HIGHLANDS	10,615	\$ 71,803	\$ 38,320	\$ 2,033	\$ 841	\$ 30,609
HILLSBOROUGH	94,474	\$ 998,161	\$ 413,160	\$ 116,344	\$ 7,431	\$ 461,226
HOLMES	2,071	\$ 17,498	\$ 13,273	\$ 440	\$ 229	\$ 3,556
INDIAN RIVER	15,207	\$ 82,748	\$ 49,698	\$ 3,125	\$ 2,159	\$ 27,765
JACKSON	5,037	\$ 33,303	\$ 20,151	\$ 1,415	\$ 147	\$ 11,590
JEFFERSON	1,471	\$ 8,357	\$ 4,679	\$ 319	\$ 55	\$ 3,303
LAFAYETTE	742	\$ 4,141	\$ 1,403	\$ 87	\$ 4	\$ 2,647
LAKE	34,463	\$ 215,858	\$ 117,234	\$ 9,675	\$ 2,932	\$ 86,017
LEE	57,501	\$ 311,448	\$ 164,470	\$ 18,186	\$ 5,163	\$ 123,629
LEON	19,304	\$ 106,432	\$ 49,068	\$ 16,027	\$ 2,191	\$ 39,146
LEVY	4,605	\$ 49,861	\$ 15,631	\$ 987	\$ 103	\$ 33,140
LIBERTY	655	\$ 2,828	\$ 1,827	\$ 127	\$ 1	\$ 873

Florida Veterans Foundation

The Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) was created by the 2008 Legislature as a Direct Support Organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. As a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, all donations to the Foundation go to support Florida veterans and their families. Information is available at www.FloridaVeteransFoundation.org.

Foundation highlights this fiscal year:

- ⇒ The Foundation received 380 direct requests for financial assistance in Tallahassee and approved 202.
- ⇒ The Foundation provided direct financial assistance to veterans totaling \$210,402 (Ref. 2015 Audit), covering, but not limited to, items such as housing, emergency housing, utilities, identification documents, and transportation.
- ⇒ The Foundation raised \$222,381 (Ref. 2015 Audit) for general revenue and \$105,942 (Ref. 2015 Audit) for two Homeless Veterans Stand Down events. The events offer a variety of services to area homeless veterans, including medical and dental care, hygiene, stand down courts/legal services, employment services, clothing, permanent/temporary housing, claims preparation/processing services and transportation.
 - ◇ In April the North Florida Homeless Veterans Stand Down in Tallahassee assisted 250 veterans and utilized more than 650 volunteers from 75 Federal/State/County/City agencies.
 - ◇ In May more than 800 volunteers from 124 agencies assisted 255 veterans at the South Florida Homeless Veterans Stand Down in Miami.
 - ◇ The Foundation also provided \$5,000 in financial support to the Ocala Homeless Veterans Stand Down and provided tents/lights/cots to the Pasco County Homeless Veterans Stand Down.
 - ◇ The main goal of each of these events was to provide desperately needed services and support to homeless veterans with respect and dignity.
- ⇒ The Foundation provides funding (\$20,000) for the printing of the FDVA Veterans Benefits Guide, distributed by all FDVA Veterans' Benefits personnel as well as County Veterans Service Offices, VA Hospitals and clinics, military bases, as well as other public and private entities throughout the state. More than \$8,500 was provided to support the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame.

Col. Washington J. Sanchez Jr.
U.S. Army, Retired
Chairman

(850) 488 – 4181
Suite 2107, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399



Appendix IV



Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (d/b/a Veterans Florida) was established by the State in 2014 as part of the Florida GI Bill. Veterans Florida's mission is to attract and retain veterans and their families by connecting them to employment, training, and educational opportunities, strengthen Florida businesses by educating them on the value and skillsets Veterans bring to the workforce and providing training resources for their Veteran hires, and enhance the entrepreneurial skills of Veterans. The Governor, Speaker of the House, and Senate President appointed the Board of Directors in October 2014.

Veterans Florida staff made their headquarters in Tallahassee in March 2015 and received approval from the Legislative Budget Commission in September 2015 to launch two veterans programs. The **FL VETS Business Training Grants Program** expecting to begin in November 2015 will provide Florida businesses with grants to train and educate full-time, military veteran employees. In addition, Veterans Florida's Board of Directors will select five State Universities to participate in the **FL VETS Entrepreneurship Program**, which will give veterans who are seeking to start their own business the opportunity to connect with local businesses and resources and provide them with assistance through peer-to-peer learning sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business round tables, networking opportunities, support of student organizations, speaker series, or other tools within a live and virtual environment.



Executive Director Bobby Carbonell presenting at the 2015 Military, Defense and Veterans Opportunities Summit on The Changing Face of Florida Veterans.

For the future, Veterans Florida is aligning partners to create a statewide network where agencies, public-private partnerships, businesses and service providers will collaborate to ensure Florida veterans and veterans seeking to relocate to the state can attain the resources they need. Veterans Florida's website went live at veteransflorida.org in July 2015 and a national marketing campaign is scheduled to begin in early 2016. Veterans Florida efforts uphold Florida's reputation as the most veteran friendly state.

-  VeteransFlorida.org
-  [Linkedin.com/company/veterans-florida](https://www.linkedin.com/company/veterans-florida)
-  [Facebook.com/veteransflorida](https://www.facebook.com/veteransflorida)
-  [Twitter.com/vetsfl](https://twitter.com/vetsfl)



Left: Executive Director Bobby Carbonell and Veterans Florida Board of Directors, Tom Rice, Captain (Ret.) Joe O'Connor, James Sampey, Jamee Graff, Jim Bagby, Councilwoman Prebble Ramswell, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) John Adams, Courtney Heidelberg, and LtGen Martin Steele.

Associated Veteran Service Organizations

As the accredited representative of 10 veterans' organizations, FDVA has the opportunity to prosecute claims before the USDVA on behalf of veterans who have placed their trust in these organizations by completing an "Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative" designation. There are no fees charged to veterans for FDVA services.

Listed below are the Veterans' Service Organizations which this department represents in claims processing with the USDVA:

-  American Ex Prisoners of War
-  American Legion
-  American Red Cross
-  Blinded Veterans Association
-  Fleet Reserve Association
-  Jewish War Veterans
-  Marine Corps League
-  Non-Commissioned Officers Association
-  The Retired Enlisted Association
-  Veterans of World War I (Family Members)

Appendix VI

Certified Veterans Service Officers

In rendering assistance to the veterans of Florida, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs works closely with all county and city veterans service officers. A listing of each county veterans service officer, their location, phone number and e-mail address are available at <http://floridavets.org/locations/>. If you are reading the FDVA Annual Report online your computer will let you go directly to the site by pressing and holding down the Ctrl key on your keyboard and left clicking your mouse on the link.

The FDVA website <http://floridavets.org/> provides many references and programs that can assist veterans and their families at the federal, state, and county level. All agencies work together in assisting Florida's veterans, their families and survivors to improve their health and economic well-being.



Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home Lake City (Columbia County)

2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 97.4% (75 Admissions, 71 Discharges)

The facility is the very first Veterans' Home in Florida and the only Assisted Living Facility, having opened in May 1990. With ongoing maintenance and energy-saving and quality of life renovations, the home is in excellent condition.

Home Life: *Set on a quiet property with deer and wild turkey observed nearly every evening, Jenkins residents enjoy diverse outings and multiple activities on the grounds, in the local community, and across north-central and north-east Florida. The Domiciliary Home prides itself of providing excellent customer service in a home-like environment. We don't just look after residents' essential needs: we integrate opportunities to participate in lectures, book and special interest clubs, celebrations, socials, and other programs that promote healthy, vibrant lifestyles.*



Residents visit the Wings of Dreams Museum.



Residents enjoy a day out to the old ball game to watch the Gator Baseball Team! Here they join the National Anthem.



Residents get creative in making Christmas wreaths to decorate the Holiday festivities.



Residents proudly posing with the Gator Baseball Mascot.

Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home Daytona Beach (Volusia County)



2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 98.2% (82 Admissions, 85 Discharges)

The facility, opened in December 1993, has undergone \$7 million in renovations since 2010. The facility is in excellent condition. Ongoing maintenance ensures a high level of safety as well as appearance.

Home Life: *At Emory L. Bennett we are a tight-knit family of residents and staff. We enjoy great support from our volunteer organizations. Every day we focus on serving our residents with compassion, sharing their lives, and providing peace of mind for their families.*



Residents enjoy attending Race Week at the nearby Daytona Beach International Speedway.



“Sammy Davis Jr. and the Rat Pack” entertain residents at Christmas with Sammy’s “Minnie Me”!



Residents receive frequent visits by the Seminole Harley Davidson Motorcycle Club that bring gifts and entertainment.



Residents participate in Memorial Day Events.

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home Land O' Lakes (Pasco County)

2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.6% (48 Admissions, 49 Discharges)



The facility recently completed an exterior renovation that is not only lovely, but provides additional strength in the event of a hurricane, and interior upgrades that included a new fire panel and monitoring system. Interior improvements include upgraded safety handrails, flooring, and new resident room furniture. The facility marked the passing of its fifteenth anniversary this year, having opened in April 1999, and remains in excellent condition.

Home Life: *Set on a quiet property, veteran residents enjoy diverse outings and activities. The Home prides itself on incorporating family and community members into our events, and fostering deep friendships among the residents. We encourage resident driven choices, including the adoption of two cats and adding an aviary to the Baldomero Lopez family.*



Residents selected to participate in Honor Flight, a program enabling World War II veterans to visit Washington, D.C., and see 'their' memorial.



No one is ever too old to enjoy a good Easter Egg Hunt!
Residents work hard on decorating eggs.



Residents enjoy being given VIP treatment in local baseball games.



Air Shows give residents time for reminiscing inside an airplane and looking around.

**Alexander “Sandy” Nininger Jr. State Veterans’ Nursing Home
Pembroke Pines (Broward County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 98.0% (77 Admissions, 74 Discharges)**



The home is in excellent condition, with several updates including new flooring installed this past year. The facility opened in June 2001 and has weathered several strong storms, yet vigilant monitoring and upkeep ensure continued safe operation and beautiful appearance.

Home Life: *Residents gather around the salt water fish tank for coffee in the morning...the daily domino game usually begins after the morning workout...social gatherings on new patio furniture in fountained court-yards...life in the Nininger Home is anything but sedentary. Frequent outings provide the residents with an open forum to the surrounding community, and volunteers provide a highly popular Friday afternoon Happy Hour.*



U.S. Marines visit the facility during Fleet Week and interact with residents sharing their stories.



A visit to the Pumpkin Patch for Halloween is a favorite of many residents who pick out a pumpkin.



Residents love getting outdoors, especially watching the baseball game at Marlin’s Park.



Residents participate in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade proudly representing their Home facility!

**Clifford Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home
Panama City (Bay County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.9%
(68 Admissions, 25 Discharges)**



The Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home opened in October 2003, and recently upgraded their flooring, resident room furniture, and dining chairs. The secured patios have all been freshly landscaped, providing a beautiful area for residents and visiting family members. The home remains in excellent condition.

Home Life: *The Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home is located in a beautiful, wooded setting, surrounded by wildlife and nature. The veteran residents regular outdoor activities and frequent offsite events such as ballgames, movies, restaurants, and shopping. There is always something fun and interesting happening for our residents at Sims.*



Excited residents celebrate Fourth of July festivities, enjoying activities, great food and fun during barbecue cookouts.



Residents are truly treated first class during Memorial Day in honor of their Patriotic service to their country.



Residents get serious and have fun when it comes down to the popular Miracle League baseball game!



Music and dancing during social parties are enjoyed by residents.

**Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home
 Port Charlotte (Charlotte County)
 2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.1% (56 Admissions, 43 Discharges)**



The Jacobson Home celebrated its tenth anniversary this year, having opened in March 2004. In a continuing effort to present a home that is comfortable and dignified, the Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home has installed new flooring, upgraded all bedroom suites, overhauled the landscaping and is in overall excellent condition.

Home Life: *A modern facility surrounded by an involved community of supportive public and civic organizations. Douglas T. Jacobson actively celebrates and honors veteran service and memory with interactive community events both on the secluded grounds and within the historical neighboring cities.*



Many motorcycle clubs keep the residents rocking and rolling, especially during the Holidays. Here a resident receives full attention from the Latin American Biker's Club.



Every year a few residents are chosen for "Honor Flight" and fly to Washington D.C. to see the WWII Memorial and more.



Air Shows give residents the opportunity to share memories.



Residents from Honor Flight pose with smiles in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home
St. Augustine (St. Johns County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.8%
(43 Admissions, 43 Discharges)



This is FDVA's newest State Veterans' Home, a LEED-certified gold facility, that respects the environment while providing a warm, caring atmosphere for its residents. The Lassen Home opened in September 2010 and remains in excellent condition.

Home Life: *The Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home, situated in a lodge-like setting, prides itself in customer care and services. Residents enjoy a wide variety of special events and diverse activities designed to appeal to individual interests.*



Residents pose with the owner of the Jacksonville Suns Baseball organization prior to a summer game.



Dressed to the 9's residents toast to the Annual Black and White Ball! The residents enjoy dressing formally for this elegant event!



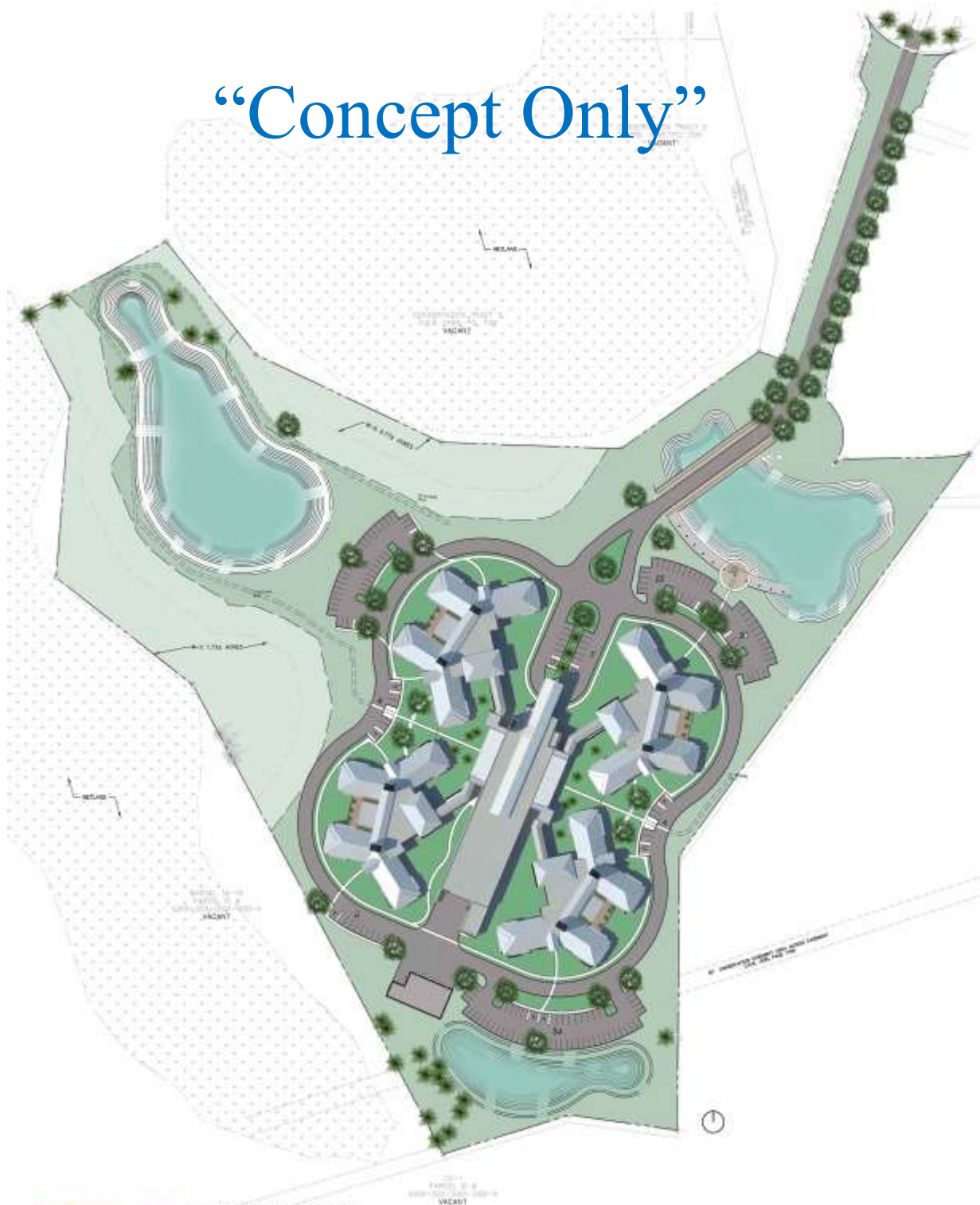
Residents participate during the Memorial Day ceremonies. This is a very touching and important event that defines their lives, and for their patriotic service to their country.



Residents exercise their right to vote and are very patriotic in casting their ballot!

**Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home
Port St. Lucie (St. Lucie County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: N/A**

“Concept Only”



Our Fiscal Impact

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
ANNUAL REPORT INFORMATION
July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

	State Veterans' Homes Program	Veterans' Benefits and Assistance	Executive Direction and Support Services
Operating Expenditures			
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 45,268,707	\$ 5,235,186	\$ 2,141,086
OPS	\$ 2,339,082	\$ 9,599	\$ 27,873
Expenses	\$ 15,332,805	\$ 292,800	\$ 736,234
Other Capital Outlay	\$ 667,575	\$ 3,488	\$ 121,020
Food Products	\$ 3,198,303	\$ -	\$ -
Vehicle	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Contracted Services	\$ 9,468,631	\$ 143,243	\$ 285,720
Recreational Equip. Supplies	\$ 76,121	\$ -	\$ -
Risk Management Insurance	\$ 2,639,487	\$ 21,545	\$ 9,466
Human Resources Assessment	\$ 353,143	\$ 34,823	\$ 9,793
Data Processing Svc SRC	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,040
Total Operating Expenditures	\$ 79,343,853	\$ 5,740,684	\$ 3,341,231
Non-Operating Expenditures			
Service Charge to General Revenue	\$ 261,341	\$ -	\$ -
Refunds-State Revenues	\$ 941,316	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Cost	\$ 49,902	\$ -	\$ -
Payment Sales Tax	\$ 3,113	\$ -	\$ -
Statewide Cost Allocation Plan	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Non-Operating Expenditures	\$ 1,255,673		
Fixed Capital Outlay			
New Home Construction	\$ 273,134	\$ -	\$ -
Add & Improvements to State Veterans' Homes	\$ 5,179	\$ -	\$ -
Maintenance/Repair	\$ 1,919,552	\$ -	\$ -
Total Fixed Capital Outlay	\$ 2,197,865		
Total	\$ 82,797,391	\$ 5,740,684	\$ 3,341,231



FIRST MUSTER AT SAINT AUGUSTINE - A Florida National Guard Painting by Jackson Walker, 1992

The “first muster” of militia troops took place in St. Augustine on Sept. 16, 1565, when Pedro Menendez de Aviles gathered around him the soldiers of his small Spanish army, as well as the civilian settlers who had accompanied him to the newly established presidio town of St. Augustine. Florida’s veterans trace their legacy of service back to this important milestone in the nation’s history and the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs is proud to serve the generations of veterans who have followed in their footsteps.



FDVA Annual Report