

Department Name	Veteran Services Bureau
Account(s)	6510

Department Function
Our mission is to assist county Veterans and their families in obtaining any county, state, or federal benefits that they are entitled to for their service in the military and finding available resources. The Veterans Service Bureau provides many services and resources to the Veterans of Albany County which include: • Initiating, developing, and advancing claims for county, state, and federal Veteran benefits • Guiding Veterans as they enroll in the VA Health Care System • Counseling and assisting with burial and death benefits for Veterans' survivors • Coordinating emergency assistance from appropriate agencies • Referring Veterans and their families to other appropriate programs for assistance • Obtaining Military records • Assisting in obtaining temporary housing and necessities for homeless Veterans • Coordinating and maintaining the Return the FAVOR discount program • Honoring outstanding deceased and living Veterans • Providing outreach to organizations and institutions

Current Year Highlights
• Conducted a monthly Honor-A-Veteran ceremony • Assisted the County Executive in recognizing distinguished Veterans for their service in the military & the community • Worked with Veterans and spouses in submitting claims for compensation, pensions, aid and attendance, and burials • Distributed information and guided Veterans to available resources • Obtained funding from NYS for the Dwyer Peer Support Program to expand the Peer Support Program to include: Sweat with Vets Hot Yoga classes, Healthy Heroes – Veterans Training Program, Martial Arts and Jiu Jitsu for Veterans, Crossfit Strength & Conditioning class, Veterans' Family Open Skate at the Albany County Ice Rink, The Big Climb at the Corning Tower • Created Veteran resources events: Veteran PTSD/stress relief gardening program, Veteran walking club, Veterans Mental Health First Aid course • Offered weekly Veterans' Coffee Club and Veterans' Breakfast; monthly lunch with Shaker Place Veterans, partnering with local restaurants such as Mission BBQ • Conducted a suicide prevention and problem gambling training event • Created a presentation on gun safety issues and safe weapon storage for Veterans and how to communicate with loved ones believed to be at risk • Provided outreach at Veteran events and Veteran organization meetings, including Veterans' Nights Out at the MVP Arena and awareness events during Firebird games • Organized a Yankee/Red Sox baseball game with the Delmar American Legion • Planned and held a Veterans' Retreat at Lawson Lake • Promoted Purple Heart Trail signage and proclamation • Held a Veterans Service to Success Resource Fair • Assisted in the Albany County Joint Veterans Committee in the planning for Memorial Day & Veteran Day events • Ensured Veteran markers and flags were placed at the Eagle Hill cemetery for Memorial Day and flags were supplied to many other cemeteries within the County • Obtained NYS Veteran Service Officer certification as well as maintaining American Legion certification. Hosted a homeless Veteran stand-down.

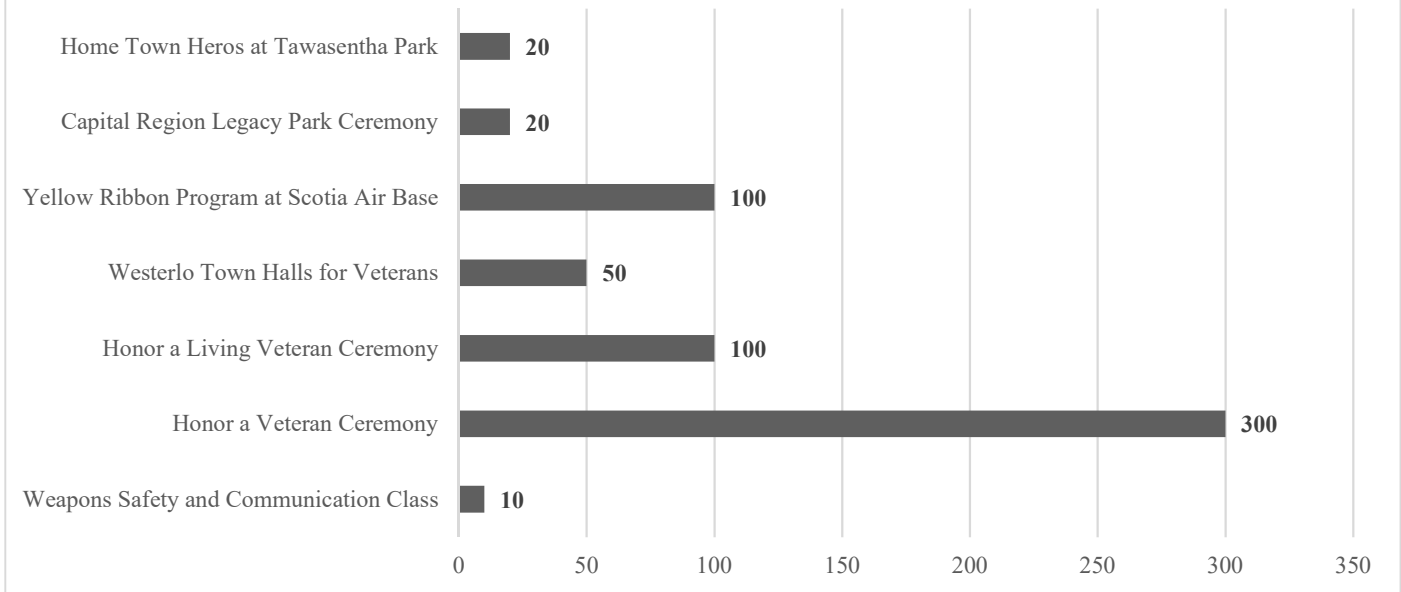
Next Year Projects
• Prioritize Dwyer Peer Support funding to maintain and expand the Veteran Peer Support program in Albany County. • Hire an additional VSO to allow us to submit more claims for Veterans. • Organize an annual awareness event for the prevention of suicide & problem gambling with Veterans. • Conduct Veteran Mental Health First Aid courses for individuals & organizations working with Veterans. *Continue to support events and organizations that bring awareness to the high Veteran suicide rate. • Pursue aggressive outreach efforts in order to reach more organizations and Veterans to ensure more Veterans are aware of the benefits available and our ability to assist with filing for those benefits. • Increase our outreach efforts by establishing additional community partners for remote outreach. • Publish a bi-monthly newsletter and a calendar of Veteran events to keep Veterans informed. • Work with the Joint Veterans Committee to improve communication, events, and efforts of the Veteran organizations in the county and the Veterans Service Bureau.

Link to Website	https://www.albanycounty.gov/departments/veterans-service-bureau
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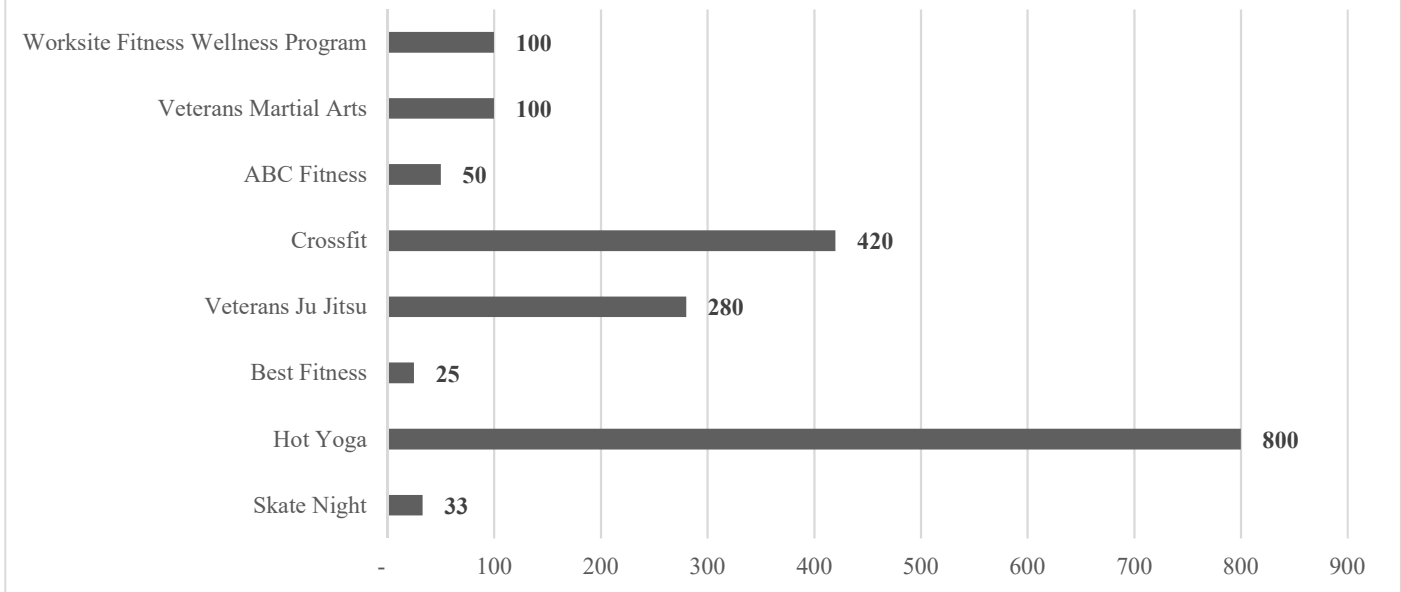
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Programmatic Highlights

2024 Ceremony Events for Veterans Attendance



2024 Fitness Events for Veterans Attendance



The Veteran population living in Albany County has declined since 2020, but, the proportion of Veterans using the VA Medical Center has slightly increased, which points to the continued need for services. Fortunately, even though the Veteran population has declined, outreach efforts coordinated by the County’s Veterans Services Bureau have increased nearly two-fold since 2020. In 2024 alone, a variety of events offered was expansive with several types represented in the above graphs.

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