



# Veterans Assistance Program



Central Kitsap Community Council  
September 4, 2024



# Veterans Advisory Board (VAB)

- Established by RCW 73.08.035 to assist indigent veterans in each Washington State county.
- All members are veterans of military or merchant marine service and honorably discharged.
- The 17 members are appointed by the Board of Commissioners to three-year terms..
- VAB members advise the county legislative authority on the needs of local indigent veterans, the resources available to local indigent veterans, and programs that could benefit the needs of local indigent veterans and their families.
- Advice is communicated through personal interaction with commissioners, recommendations submitted in changes to the board charter, revisions to the policies and procedures, and annual budget recommendations.
- Major Activities Supported by the VAB Include:
  - Veterans Assistance Fund
  - Unforgotten Run to Tahoma.
  - Spring and Fall Stand Downs
  - Veterans Garden.
  - Operation Green Light





# Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF)

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- The VAF is authorized through RCW [73.08.010](#) by the Washington State legislature to help meet emergent needs of indigent veterans and their families.
- The VAF is primarily funded through a property tax levy.
- Over \$804K is budgeted to provide emergency assistance of our indigent veterans and their families in Kitsap County in 2024.
- Direct services to meet emergent and temporary needs are delivered by Kitsap Community Resources (\$600.6K) and the Northwest Justice Project (\$50K) on behalf of Kitsap County.
- With VAB guidance, our partners have been caring for our neediest community members.



# Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF)

## 2024 VAF Mid-Year Summary

- 2023 spending was below budget.
- 2024 spending is currently below budget.
- Program client demand is trending slightly above the historic average.
  - About 70% are repeat clients.
- New client (first use of the fund) growth beyond historic levels is not evident.
- The new Kitsap Community Resources VAF fund administrator is doing an excellent job with regard to responsiveness, decision making, and leveraging available community resources to meet both emergent and long-term needs.
- KCR is abiding by policies and procedures and judicious in decision making as confirmed by quarterly program reviews.
- Funds are meeting current immediate veteran demand but anticipated tax revenue shortfalls will place demand on the fund balance.
- Referrals to other agencies to meet short term needs and implement long term solutions is effective.
- Collaboration with other agencies is having a positive impact on reducing duplicative efforts and optimizing resources.





# The Unforgotten: Run to Tahoma

- Collaborative effort between the VAB and local veteran groups to honor our fallen.
- Held on the Saturday of the Memorial Day weekend.



- Includes a ceremony to celebrate the lives of the honored veterans followed by a funeral procession to Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent, WA.
- Over 200 participated in the May 2024 event.



# April 2024 Kitsap Veterans Stand Down

- Stand Down: “...a relaxation of status of a military unit or force from an alert or operational posture.” A time to take care of your needs.
- The event is organized by volunteers of the Kitsap Area Veterans Alliance (KAVA) and members of the Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board.
- All veterans are invited to attend but special attention is given to the indigent and homeless veterans of Kitsap County.
- 32 Community Service Providers enthusiastically supported the April 2024 event by providing representatives who staffed information tables.
- 105 Veterans registered at the Stand Down and over 40 veteran volunteers supported the event.
- 15 Veterans were homeless.
- All data collected was self-reported by the veteran.





# April 2024 Kitsap Veterans Stand Down

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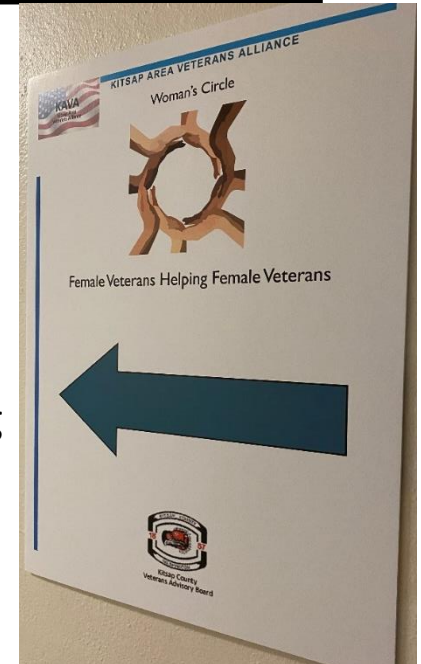
- Stand Downs traditionally serve about 150 veterans each year.
- Served about 105 veterans in April. Expect as many or more in September.
- Distribute food, general merchandise, Women's group bags, and camping gear to the homeless living outdoors.
- Medical and Dental screening services are now a consistent offering at events thanks to Peninsula Community Health.
- Financial support of the event by the VAF has decreased significantly due to fund raising efforts by the Kitsap Area Veterans Alliance who has raised about \$50K over the last 12 months.
- Proud of the expanding support offered to women veterans by Jayme DeGooyer and Peggy Roy.



# April 2024 Kitsap Veterans Stand Down

## Women's Circle

- A service for women veterans offered by women veterans in a private setting.
- 21% of all attendees in April were women – up from 17% last April.
  - Women are increasing as a percentage of the larger veteran community.
- Led by Jayme DeGooyer, a variety of issues are addressed including sexual assault.
- Referrals for services to the community are offered and direct assistance delivered based on need.
- Contacts in the community are offered.



- Community service providers generously donate items.
- An inventory of items is maintained throughout the year and distributed as needed.
- Outside of the Stand Down, women are available to answer questions and address concerns from our women veterans.





# Veterans Garden

- Provides a safe and convenient location in Bremerton on Sylvan Way where veterans can grow produce for their homes.
- VAB sponsored and supported.
- Relocated in 2023 from Port Orchard.
- Procured a much larger plot for the 2024 growing season.
- Close to public transportation.
- Vegetables have been harvested and donated to food banks through the summer.





# Veterans Garden



Kitsap County  
Veterans Advisory Board

## The Kitsap County Veterans Advisory Board 2024 Veterans Garden

### Blueberry Park P-Patch Garden

737 Sylvan Way, Bremerton, WA 98310

Kitsap County Veterans Services 360-337-4811

Join us as we grow food for veterans.



Scan here to follow us on Facebook



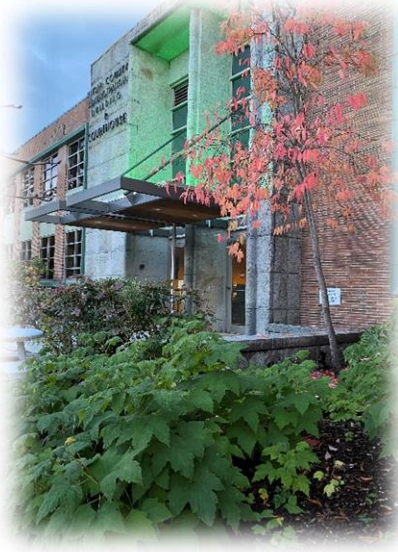
Revised 08/1/2024





# Operation Green Light

- National Association of Counties (NACo) initiative in 2022 for county governments to visibly show support for local veterans by displaying green lights on government buildings.
- Through social media messaging we encourage residents to display green lights at their homes.
- Public Works did a great job of installing and promoting our displays on the courthouse and administration building.
- We hope to expand green lights on the public works building in 2024.





# Veteran Resource Center



## KITSAP COUNTY VETERAN RESOURCE CENTER

OLYMPIC COLLEGE, BUILDING 11, ROOM 104  
OPEN TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS 10:00AM TO  
2:00PM TO ALL VETERANS

Do you have questions about veterans benefits you have earned and deserve?  
Feel free to reach out so we can talk about:

- FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- HOUSING SUPPORT
- CAREER SERVICES
- HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- LEGAL ASSISTANCE
- TRANSITION ASSISTANCE
- PEER SUPPORT
- RESOURCE REFERRALS
- VSO REFERRALS



Schedule a Veterans  
Resource Center appointment  
by scanning this QR code  
or call Rick Becker, Kitsap  
County Veterans Program  
Coordinator, at 360-337-  
4811.

Kitsap County  
Veterans Services  
Home Page







# Veteran Resource Center

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- The VAB approved a pilot project in June to host a Veterans Resource Center.
- In partnership with Olympic College, administrators are donating an office with equipment to host a Veteran Resource Center.
- Located in Building 11, Room 104, co-located with the college Military and Veteran Programs offices with room for expansion if warranted later.
- Provides a place for all veterans to receive information resources about their veteran benefits and apply for access to the VAF.
- Started operations on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, with office hours on Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00am to 2:00pm.
- The Kitsap Community Resources VAF administrator will hold office hours at the resource center on Wednesdays starting on August 14, 2024.
- Initial impressions of the service are very positive from the veterans served as well as college staff.
- Will assess operations through September at the October VAB meeting to determine next steps.



# Summary

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- The Veterans Advisory Board is engaged and actively serving local veterans in need.
- Indigent veterans and their families are using the VAF at a relatively steady rate from year to year.
- Cost of goods and services are increasing year over year, in some cases month to month so spending for some items is up over the same time last year.
- Eviction Prevention and Rent assistance continues to dominate VAF expenditures.
- Rent in our county is expensive and increasing in cost.
- Utilities and auto repairs are also driving VAF expenses.
- Use of motels for temporary housing has decreased in part due to aggressive measures to reduce evictions.
- Changes to the eligibility and per veteran award level are being recommended to help better meet needs.



# Moving Forward

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- 2025 budgets for Kitsap Community Resources and the Northwest Justice Project are expected to increase due to slightly higher revenue projections and inflation.
- Continue looking for for interagency overlap in services offered where appropriate to stretch emergency dollars to meet temporary needs.
- Continue looking at ways to direct veterans toward self-sustainment with community partners.
- Adopt eligibility and benefit level changes to reach more veterans and offer a bit more assistance to provide meaningful help.
- Monitor Veteran Resource Center activity and assess expansion of office hours and office space to meet veteran demand for in-person services.
- Remain faithful to struggling Veterans and their families by offering responsive and efficient services when requested.



Questions?

