



March 2025

Putting Veterans First Since 1992
NEW DIRECTIONS *for* **VETERANS**

Honoring Service; Empowering Veterans

Hello everyone,

A significant factor that encouraged me to enlist in the Marine Corps was the collective impact that military service members make. All active-duty military personnel know that, whether serving by land, air, or sea, we are only able to ensure the safety and prosperity of our nation when we stand together.

Since my retirement from the Marine Corps, while my day-to-day mission may have changed; my values and commitment to uplifting our military community remains unchanged. That is why I am excited to share a meaningful opportunity taking place in May that would not be possible without the collaboration of Los Angeles City Councilmember, Traci Park of the 11th District and the Disabled Veterans National Foundation.



Leo Cuadrado, M.B.A
Captain (Retired)
United States Marine Corps
Executive Director

In partnership, on Tuesday, May 6th, we will be hosting a Veterans Resource Fair at our Veteran Opportunity Center, Building 116, on the Greater Los Angeles VA Campus. This event will provide veterans with essential resources and services and an opportunity for our community to honor and support those who served.

The Resource Fair will also feature collaborations with organizations such as LA Metro, Meals on Wheels, Rose's Agency Home Care, Salvation Army, and the YMCA; all working together to enhance the quality of life for our veterans.

I encourage you to reach out to Olivia Russell, Development Associate, via email at orussell@ndvets.org for more information about this impactful event.

It is an honor to serve our military community. The Veteran Spotlights within this edition of our digital newsletter are a reflection of that honor. A core principle for military service members is to "Leave No Man or Woman Behind." While individual veterans may face struggles, when great people come together to support their recovery, each can thrive.

With Gratitude,

★ Honoring Our Heroes ★ Gala

Save the Date
Thursday, November 13, 2025
5:30 p.m. - Cocktail Reception
7 p.m. - Dinner and Program
Skirball Cultural Center
2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA

We look forward to you joining us at our annual gala. We are looking for meaningful supporters to secure resources to further enhance quality of life for veterans in our care. Those interested in volunteering, or to learn more about the opportunity; please reach out to:

Scott Brumer, Director of Development
SBrumer@ndvets.org
 310.806.8413
 or visit ndvets.org

★ **To learn how you can help enrich the lives and wellbeing of veterans [CLICK HERE](#)**



Veteran Opportunity Center (VOC)



January was an unimaginable time for our beautiful city of Los Angeles. The impact of the Palisades and Eaton fires cannot be understated, and our heart goes out to all affected. While the fires ravaged much of the area by the VOC located on the Greater Los Angeles VA Campus; due to the diligence and commitment of our staff we were able to transport veterans to safe shelter. Thankfully, we were not directly impacted, but the damage and significance of this natural disaster affects us all as we rebuild and restore community.



★ Staff Spotlight ★

NDVets Case Manager, Jose E., was honored as the Veteran of the Game at the UCLA Men's Basketball game v.s. Michigan State Spartans, February 4th.

In 1994, Jose enlisted in the US Army Active Duty component, as a computer analyst under the Signal Corps. Jose was a non-commissioned officer, Private First Class, during the Gulf War. Jose was stationed in a military school with Kuwaiti soldiers when the Gulf Conflict broke out. Throughout his service, Jose was stationed in Lackland AFB, Ft. Sill, OK., and Ft. Jackson, SC.

He has since devoted himself to serving other veterans at New Directions. Joined by two veterans in our program, we enjoyed a night of basketball, a celebrity siting or two and a UCLA win!

Celebrating Black Heroes★

February is Black History Month. There are almost two million Black veterans in the United States, and more than a third of our population at NDVets identifies as Black.

To celebrate, veterans in our Low-Demand program came together to watch a documentary about the Tuskegee Airmen. Fighting in World War 2, over 16,000 airmen were trained as the first Black flying unit in the U.S. military.

Veterans enjoyed snacks and red velvet cake to commemorate the historic group who broke so many barriers and are an integral part of American history.



Community Engagement

NDVets Let Their Creativity Flow with LA Metro

Artist Stephanie Mercado, in collaboration with LA Metro, held a workshop February 18th for veterans in our care. Stephanie led them through a series of steps; tracing original or provided art, carving their own stamp, choosing paint colors and eventually using the stamp to decorate their own bandana. Stephanie will be using these designs for the future Metro D Line station at the Greater LA VA Medical Center construction site. The banners will honor veterans, their families, and the Greater LA veteran community.



NDVets Hit a Home Run

February 26th, UCLA Men's Baseball team invited the veterans of Greater LA VA Campus to attend an afternoon game against the Arizona State Sun Devils at Jackie Robinson Field.



NDVets joined in on the fun, enjoyed Chick-fil-A courtesy of UCLA Veterans Partnership, and swung away the winter blues as temps hit 80°!



February 20th, LA Councilmember Traci Park, 11th District and Athens Services teamed up for a community clean-up at the Greater LA VA Campus. NDVets staff and residents volunteered to have the opportunity to beautify the streets and grounds our veterans call home.

PROFILES IN COURAGE



Seth F. - Marine Corps

Our permanent supportive housing (PSH) programs not only offer veterans a safe place to call home, but also with purpose and inspiration for a brighter future. This is what Ybarra Village resident, Seth F. has found.

Seth, a Southern California native, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2008. However, due to personal and “circumstantial” challenges he fell into “a state of turmoil.” Struggling with bad habits and unable to find the support he needed, he ultimately received a general discharge in 2012. After leaving the Marine Corps, Seth spent several years working across the United States before returning to Southern California in 2015—where he unfortunately fell into homelessness and addiction.

The next five years Seth spent homeless; learning tips and tricks from others, and came to understand the hierarchy that exists in the unhoused community. However, it was on his 30th birthday, justice-impacted and at a crossroads, he made “the decision to get my life in order.” Despite trying other recovery facilities and programs, Seth was introduced to NDVets and he knew, “I have a more important purpose, and I couldn’t be stuck in that cycle anymore”.

“It might seem like you're stuck, and you'll just never get out. But the first step is just believing that you can get out, believing that this isn't your fate. That no matter how much it seems like everything is stacked against you, everything can always change in an instant. And all it takes is a little bit of ambition.”



Ybarra Village Veteran Seth F. (Middle) and Resident Service Coordinators; Eli M. (Left) and James W. (Right)

“I need a sense of purpose and the most purpose I’ve ever had was either providing for someone I loved or helping somebody I cared about.”

Seth has called Ybarra Village home for 5 years, forming deep bonds with Resident Service Coordinators, who have “felt like family”. Their guidance led Seth to a new path, going back to school. Enrolling in Santa Monica College was “validating” and he “just wanted to keep going”.

Today, he is a junior at USC with honors and plans to further his studies at Pepperdine University; ultimately his goal is to be a psychologist at the VA, helping veterans who have faced struggles similar to his own.

“I’ve lived every different walk of life,” Seth shared. “What better person than somebody who’s going through and went through all the same things that these people are going through or went through?” ★

★ Permanent Supportive Housing



Sepulveda PSH Resident Service Coordinator Justin F. (L) and Veteran resident Antons E. (R)

While we highlight residents and the strides they make in the program; we would be remiss without acknowledging the staff that help our veterans expand their horizons and ensure a lending hand and an objective ear. Resident Service Coordinators (RSCs) tirelessly work together to support a safe environment for residents in PSH; whether that be ensuring meal and produce delivery, planning outings and activities, and even assistance with decision making and advice. While that doesn't even cover half of what our RSCs do, we are endlessly appreciative of the care and support they give to our veterans.

★ ★ ★ PROFILES IN COURAGE ★ ★ ★

Robert S. - Marine Corps

On the VA Campus our transitional housing is known as Building 116, but our true name is the Veteran Opportunity Center. For PSH resident and VOC alumnus, Robert S., we were able to help him do just that - opportunity.

A South LA native, Robert first enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2002, after his mother passed unexpectedly. While in basic training, his father suffered from a heart attack and subsequently passed as well. Robert was not notified until after completing basic training, leaving him unable to attend the funeral and process the grief of his losses. This became a "pivotal moment" in his life, and he saw "no reason to expect to succeed anymore" - only "to survive." Struggling with addiction, Robert was discharged in 2003, and found work as a construction worker.

After experiencing chronic homelessness since 2018 and cycling through eight different veteran programs, he finally found the support he needed. "I have never managed to get clean after 25 years of use since the Marine Corps—until I came here." Transitional Housing Director, Dr. Maurice Carter welcomed Robert into the program, which requires residents to maintain sobriety. "This program holds you accountable and then works with you."

Once at NDVets, Robert found support from case managers, who were able to recover essential documents and secure him service-connected benefits; his clinician who guided him through mental health care; and community-building programs like the Imagination Workshop. "It took being in these four walls to succeed...to use all the resources they give you."



Clinician Samantha T. and Robert S.



After graduating from the program at the VOC, Robert transitioned to PSH at MacArthur Field. With stable housing, he secured a job in construction, reclaiming the career he once had. Today, he has not only his own apartment, a motorcycle, and a dog—but also a new lease on life. "You just have to really, really want it and commit." ★

"If you commit to the New Directions program then you will have the opportunity to have everything you are trying to achieve, financially and also stability."

▶▶▶ Looking Ahead ◀◀◀

As the winter turns to Spring, we look forward to all the new and exciting developments taking place. From the expansion of PSH at MacArthur Field to fellowship and well-being events for our veterans; 2025 is off to a great start. We will continue to strive to provide the shelter, care, and safety for veterans and their families.

We will improve upon the valuable partnerships we hold with community organizations, civic offices, and meaningful supporters. Without collaboration, we could not achieve as greatly as we aim to. We hope you join us in maximizing our impact in the upcoming months. Together we can work to ensure every veteran in Los Angeles lives a prosperous and fulfilling life.

Honoring Our Heroes



March is Women's History Month, celebrating the instrumental accomplishments women have contributed throughout American history. At NDVets we specifically want to honor the brave female service members and veterans who have sacrificed for our country. Women make up more than 16% of active duty military, and over 10% of veterans. Our OASIS Women Veterans Program serves female veterans and their families, providing the support and services they are due. In March, and every month, we honor their service and endeavor to be a safe-haven for themselves and their future.

★ Pictured right is Harriet Tubman, an American hero, famous for her freeing of slaves through the Underground Railroad.

★ An integral part of American history, Tubman was also a veteran; serving as a cook, a nurse, and a spy for the Union during the Civil War. Not only that, during her three years of service, she was the first woman in American history to lead a military expedition.

Upcoming Events

April 30th: NDVets will be attending the World Champion LA Dodgers v.s. Miami Marlins at 12 p.m. To learn how you can help support veterans' day out at the ballgame, contact us!

May 6th: In partnership with the Disabled Veterans National Foundation and LA Councilmember Traci Park, 11th District; NDVets is excited to host a Veterans Resource Fair.

There will be essential goods distributed, free food, and entertainment. We welcome the opportunity for this exciting collaboration, and any volunteers who would like to brighten the day of our veterans!



TRACI PARK
LOS ANGELES COUNCILWOMAN ★ 11TH DISTRICT

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