

DVNF NEWSLETTER

Dear Supporters and Friends,

As we welcome 2024, we at the Disabled Veterans National Foundation (DVNF) are filled with gratitude and enthusiasm. Reflecting on the past year, we celebrate our collective achievements in empowering veterans through our diverse initiatives. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in reaching new milestones, hosting impactful resource fairs, expanding innovative programs, and creating heartwarming success stories. As we embrace the opportunities and challenges ahead, we remain committed to making a significant difference in the lives of our heroes.



THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF TASHAWNYA "TISH" DI LEO: FROM ARMY COMBAT VETERAN TO ADVOCATE AND MENTOR



In the heart of the SMVF (Service Members, Veterans, and their Families) community, there's a name that resonates with resilience and compassion: Tashawnya "Tish" Di Leo. Her story is one of dedication, transformation, and relentless support for those who have served our nation.

Ms. Di Leo's journey began in the disciplined ranks of the United States Army, where she served with valor and distinction. As a combat veteran, she experienced firsthand the challenges that confront service members both on and off the battlefield. These experiences, both exhilarating and harrowing, shaped her resolve and fueled her passion for supporting her fellow veterans.

After her retirement from the Army, Ms. Di Leo embarked on a new mission, driven by her personal experiences and a deep-seated desire to give back to her brothers and sisters in arms. She found her calling at the Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRA), where she currently serves as a Project Associate with the SAMHSA's SMVF Technical

Assistance Center. Here, she plays a pivotal role in providing technical assistance to strengthen behavioral health systems, a testament to her expertise and dedication to the cause.

Her journey didn't stop there. Ms. Di Leo's tireless work saw her in various impactful roles, including Director of the Veterans Mental Health Department at the Texas Veterans Commission and several positions within the Military Veteran Peer Network. Each role was a step towards her goal – improving the mental health and well-being of veterans and their families.

Over the past decade, Ms. Di Leo has trained hundreds of peers, mental health professionals, and law enforcement officers, with a focus on critical areas like suicide prevention, de-escalation, and peer support. Her teachings and insights have been a beacon of hope and guidance for many.

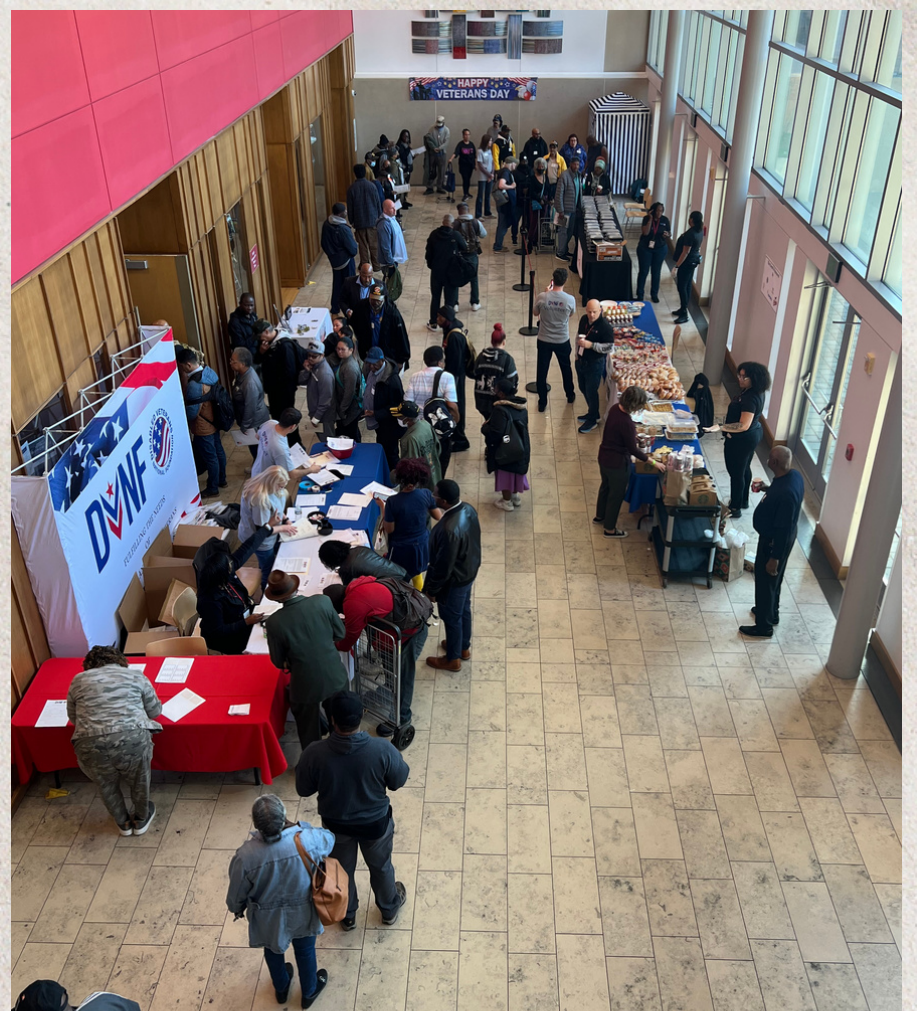
But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Ms. Di Leo's story is how she balances her professional achievements with her personal life. A proud mother of two amazing “Army Brats,” she instills the values of service and community in her children. Together, they volunteer and support the SMVF community, making service a family affair.



Ms. McCullough holds a Bachelor of Science in Justice Administration, a credential that underscores her commitment to justice and advocacy and a Master's Degree in Public Administration with an emphasis on Policy. Her life story is not just a tale of personal triumph but a narrative that inspires and uplifts others. It's a story of a warrior who continues to fight, not on the battlefields, but in the hearts and minds of those she serves.

COMPREHENSIVE IMPACT OF DVNF'S 2023 PROGRAMS

The Veterans Resource Fair at Silver Spring Civic Center was a landmark event, significantly serving 229 veterans, surpassing the prior year's achievements. The fair provided an extensive range of services, including DVNF Health & Comfort Kits, financial assistance, nutritional provisions, and grooming services, addressing the multifaceted needs of our veterans in a compassionate and comprehensive manner.



GUIDING VETERANS HOME: THE SUCCESS STORY OF DVNF'S NEW GPS PROGRAM

The DVNF's Grants to Provide Stability (GPS) Program had a remarkable inaugural year, offering substantial financial support to veterans. The program provided \$140,910.58 to 159 veterans across 34 states, aiding them in essential home maintenance and fostering stability. A touching testimony from a veteran named Johnathan encapsulates the program's impact.

He described the program as a gift, noting how it offered support in a respectful and straightforward manner during his time of need. The GPS Program's easy process and respectful treatment of veterans underline DVNF's dedication to aiding veterans in challenging times. For more detailed information about the GPS program, please visit DVNF's website at www.dvnf.org



EMPOWERING VETERANS: DVNF'S CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT PROGRAMS AND CANINE COMPANIONS

In 2023, DVNF's Capacity Building Grants program made a significant impact by distributing 47 grants in various areas like Adaptive Sports, Dental Health, and Equine Therapy. These grants, reaching multiple states, significantly enhanced the physical, emotional, and social well-being of veterans.

A key highlight was the Clear Path for Veterans Canine Program. Supported by a \$22,000 DVNF grant, it graduated one service dog team and connected over 50 veterans to a holistic care model. Serving a diverse group of veterans, including both male and female members from different military branches, this program showcased DVNF's dedication to inclusivity and comprehensive support. The success of these initiatives reflects DVNF's commitment to empowering veterans through thoughtful, impactful programs.



COMPASSIONATE OUTREACH: THE IMPACT OF DVNF'S HEALTH AND COMFORT PROGRAM

In 2023, DVNF's Health and Comfort Program, bolstered by the dedication of its volunteers, made significant contributions to veterans' lives. Over 47 shipments were delivered to 19 states, reaching more than 18,000 veterans with essential comfort kits.



These volunteers played a critical role, assembling these kits which included health and hygiene items, clothing, and more, catering to the needs of veterans from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the program innovatively introduced Women's Kits, specifically designed to meet the unique needs of female veterans, including vital feminine hygiene items. This holistic approach underlines DVNF's commitment to addressing the specific needs of all veterans, ensuring they receive the care and respect they deserve.

CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP: MILDRED MESEMBE'S CONTRIBUTION TO DVNF



Mildred Mesembe, the Director of Finance at DVNF, plays an instrumental role in the organization's financial health. With an MBA from the University of Wales, U.K., and extensive experience in financial management, Mildred skillfully oversees crucial areas like accounting, audit, and treasury. Her strategic insight in resource allocation and performance monitoring has been vital in driving DVNF's growth and success in serving veterans. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mildred for her hard work and dedication. We are truly thankful to have her as a part of the DVNF team.

CLOSING REMARKS FROM JOSEPH VANFONDA, CEO

As we embark on the journey of 2024, your continued support remains the foundation of our success. Together, we are committed to making a profound difference in the lives of our nation's heroes.

Joseph VanFonda, USMC SgtMaj (Ret)

CEO, Disabled Veterans National Foundation