

# 2020 - 2021 Annual Report



## **NO FLORIDA VETERAN LEFT BEHIND**

In 2008, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) as a Direct Support Organization for the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA). The Foundation operates for the direct and indirect benefit of the Veterans of Florida, the FDVA, state Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO). The FVF is also a nonprofit organization operating for charitable and educational purposes under Section 501(C)(3). While many of Florida's Veterans successfully transitioned to a post-military career, many encountered challenges that impede their progress. Veterans report priority services needed during this transition were employment assistance, transportation, housing, legal issues, mental health and utility assistance in emergencies.

The FVF team is composed of a volunteer Chairman and Board of Directors. The majority of the Foundation Directors are retired, military disabled Veterans who donate more than 40 hours per week of their time to support the Foundation's mission to align support with the FDVA mission of Advocacy, to ensure greater impact for Veterans throughout the state of Florida. FVF has taken charge of representing Florida Veterans and their families through congressionally chartered Florida-based Veterans Service Organizations.

The FVF collaborates with various entities and state agencies with an interest in solving issues that ultimately affect Florida and the economy. Our staunch effort is realizing successes throughout the Veteran community and gaining incredible interest at all levels of the government within Florida and through recognized accomplishments.

FDVA has recently appointed Commander Dennis O. Baker, USN (Ret) to be Chairman of the Foundation. He is past president of FVF and is leading the way to help our Veterans. Lew Wilson continues as President & CEO and is spearheading the day by day activities to include increased grant and fundraising opportunities. FVF's new programs have received positive reactions from local communities and helped thousands of Veterans around the state.

### **Fiscal Year 2020/2021**

Florida Veterans Foundation in support of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs has aggressively approached service to Florida Veterans through collaboration with statewide associations and organizations and state agencies who have a vested interest in solving those issues that plague Veterans and ultimately affect Florida and the economy. Our approach is measured through outreach and educational services and programs to help 1) find Veterans to register for VA benefits 2) help Veterans in emergency crisis situations 3) make Veterans aware of the many resources available to them to enhance their quality of life. This is accomplished through the enlistment of services and resource organizations with similar missions as well as an increased Volunteer Corps who support FVF's mission. Our efforts continue to realize successes within the Veteran communities and is gaining the attention of varied levels of government within the state of Florida. These accomplishments are setting the standard for the rest of the nation to follow.

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## **Suicide Prevention, Opioids/Mental Health Services**

FVF continues to collaborate with Tampa Bays areas 2-1-1 Crisis Center to provide support for statewide campaigns that will connect the Veteran population to service providers at all levels regarding issues such as Suicide Prevention, Opioid Abuse, PTSD, and Mental Health Treatment.

## **Aging Veteran Outreach/Forgotten Warrior Project**

This three year grant provides for collaboration with the National Association of Veterans and Families to provide educational seminars and claims assistance to aging wartime Veterans and their Survivors in Broward and surrounding counties about the VA Pension with Aid & Attendance benefits. Because of COVID-19 this has been expanded to virtual seminars provided to statewide assisted living associations and facilities in local communities.

## **Emergency Financial Aid**

The FVF's successful Financial Aid Program continues its partnership with the Project Vet Relief which is managed by the American Legion of Florida. In addition to the current program, the FVF created the COVID-19 Project Vet Relief Fund to promote around the state of Florida and recruit donations to help our Veterans in Need caused by the Covid Pandemic.

## **Volunteer Programs**

FVF received a grant from Volunteer Florida that requires us to recruit 400 volunteers who will provide over 5,000 hours of volunteer services in support of our Veterans. FVF currently has 556 Volunteers who have provided over 26,000 hours to serve our Veterans.

## **FVF Board of Directors & Transparency**

Due to the COVID 19, past participation from the board was limited. Now that the State has opened up, the board has increased its community involvement and continues its boots on the ground assistance for Veterans and their families. FVF continues its transparency with the addition of a new 90% rating by Charity Navigator to augment the Gold Seal of Transparency from GuideStar.

## **Forward March Ambassadors for Veterans Council**

This program was born in January, 2020 to help FVF with a program of sustainability and now has over thirty Ambassadors that include individuals and businesses. Ambassadors pay 1,000 a year for three years or a lump sum of \$2,800. This ongoing program helps the foundation with a dedicated funding source for years to come. The council meets each year to connect with each other and to share ideas and programs that are working in their communities.

## **Veterans Legal Services**

FVF continues its mission to provide education and outreach through its collaborators and partners for the Florida Veterans Legal Helpline which is run by Bay Area Legal Services, Florida Veterans can get an appointment with an experienced attorney who can provide direct advice and assistance.

## **Florida Veterans Benefits Guides**

FVF continues its mission to support the education, outreach and funding of the Florida Veterans Benefits Guide in print and digital versions. FVF printed over 90,000 guides in FY 20-21.

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## FVF Grants

The FVF has contracted with a full time grant writer who is responsible to researching and applying for grants to help Veterans in a variety of ways.

- Volunteer Florida Grant - This \$20,000 grant was awarded to the Foundation to recruit, train and sustain a corps of volunteers to help support our Veterans in each district, statewide.
- Other Grants - To date we have received grants from Target, Walgreens, Leon County, RRF Foundation for Aging and more. We have several grants pending that total over \$250,000.

## Veterans Served - Foundation Successes - FVF Board/Staff & Collaborations

The Foundation collaborates with many organizations around the state where we work together in a variety of ways to include the following: Internal, External, Team, Cross-Departmental, Community, Virtual, Strategic Alliance and Online. FVF Direct Financial Assistance included: Individual Veterans & their families, homeless Veterans housing, meals, and other items needed, claims assistance, recognition programs and more. Below are successful Foundation accomplishments.

Organization	Program	Veterans Served	Value Amounts
Individual Veterans & Organizations	Emergency Direct Financial Assistance	217	\$217,587
FVF Staff & Board	Personally Served Veterans	12,871	
FVF Marketing Programs	Education, Outreach & Benefits	400,448	
Veterans Data Services	Education & Benefits	93,899	
Aging Veterans Benefits Approved	VA Pension w/A&A Claims assistance	774 Claims	\$39,628,000.00
Emergency Crisis Lines	Social Services	18,273	
Board of Directors Volunteer Hours	Veterans Education & Outreach	16,118 Hours	
New Volunteers Recruited	556 Volunteers	26,555	

### **Chairman, Staff & Board of Directors' Participation Events**

Veteran Treatment Courts, County Council Meetings, Veteran Day Ceremonies, Mission United Advisory Council, Florida Veterans Council, Commanders Meetings, Veteran Awards, Homeless Veterans Events, Burial & Memorial Services, Senior Veterans Coalition Meetings, Statewide Association Conferences and more.

Acknowledgement: FVF is grateful for FDVA's partnership through the provisions of office space, administrative and legal collaboration efforts which helps to support FVF's mission objectives.

