Jim Hoessle
Secretary

Randall Schmidt
President

Phillip Grassa
Commissioner

Joe Destro
Vice President

Jack Forster
Commissioner

Medina County Veterans Service Commission

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E-mail: veterans@medinacountyveterans.org | Website: www.medinacountyveterans.org

Veterans Service Office | Medina County, Ohio
End of Year Brief, CY 2020

January 2021

Our Pledge

When you come into the Medina County Veterans Service Office one of our knowledgeable associates will assist you.
The people that work in the Medina County Veterans Service Office have a compassionate understanding of the problems, which confront veterans, widows, widowers, and their families.

At the Medina County Veterans Service Office, we are deeply concerned with the assistance, care and support that our Veterans receive. We understand that alleviating the suffering that accompanies an accident, illness or death is important. In most cases we are able to offer veterans, their surviving spouse, and/or dependent children the assistance they need and deserve. It is our duty to ensure our Veterans have the very best service possible. This is at the heart of our mission here at the Medina County Veterans Service Office.

Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have a problem.

Director & Staff
Medina County Veterans Service Office

Our Mission

The Medina County Veterans Service Office has a mission to provide temporary aid and assistance to veterans, dependents and survivors in time of need and provide assistance when submitting claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
The Medina County Veterans Service Office is a state mandated agency dedicated to aiding Medina County Veterans during times of need.

Our History

The Veterans Service Assistance program was started over one hundred years ago (1886) to assist the Union Soldiers and their families in times of need. Each of the 88 counties in Ohio has a board of five appointed Veterans Service Commissioners who administer the program for their respective county.

Our purpose is not to sustain and subsidize an unsatisfactory lifestyle. Rather it is to provide temporary immediate assistance to those who will make a conscientious effort to find a permanent solution to their current financial dilemma.

Medina County
Veterans Service Commission

Our Services

The Medina County Veterans Service Office provides two basic services:

1. Temporary immediate financial aid and assistance to eligible veterans and family members who have demonstrated a need as set forth by the Commission.
2. Assist veterans, family members and survivors when applying to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for benefits.

Our assistance includes but is not limited to:

- Financial Assistance
  - Rent and mortgage payments.
  - Utilities: Gas, Electric and Water
  - Food and personal hygiene items
  - Certain Medical
  - Dental Program in partnership with the Medina County Health Department
- Transportation to and from VA Medical Centers in Cleveland (Louis Stokes VAMC), Parma CBOC and Akron CBOC
- Grave markers and flags
- Free Notary for Veterans & Families
- Veterans Identification Cards (unofficial) through the Medina County Recorders Office
- Free transportation on the Medina County Public Transit (MCPT) with proper ID

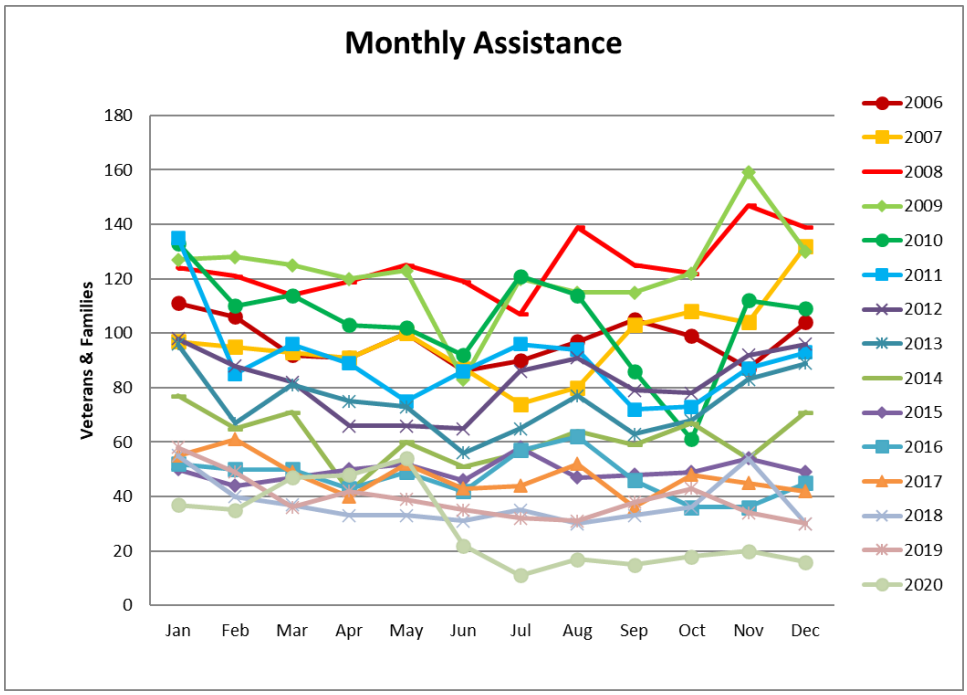
Service Assistance:

- Proper submission of claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Representation at the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) via virtual hearings
- Preparations of forms and paperwork
- Documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Submission for records, awards decorations and medals
- DD 214 certification
- Employment resources (website)

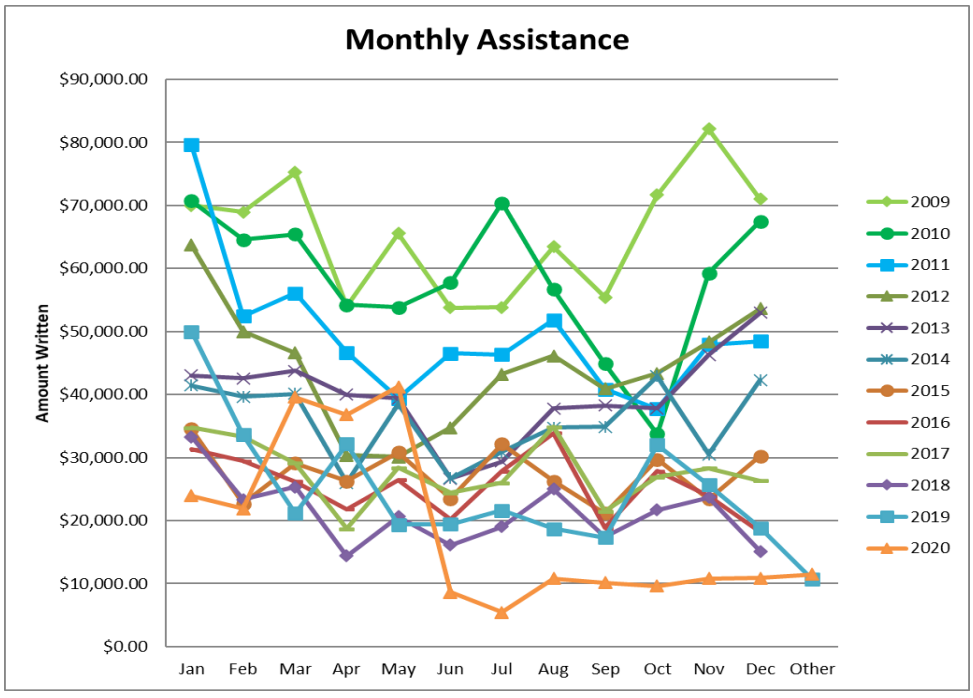
Our services are FREE of charge!

Assistance Program

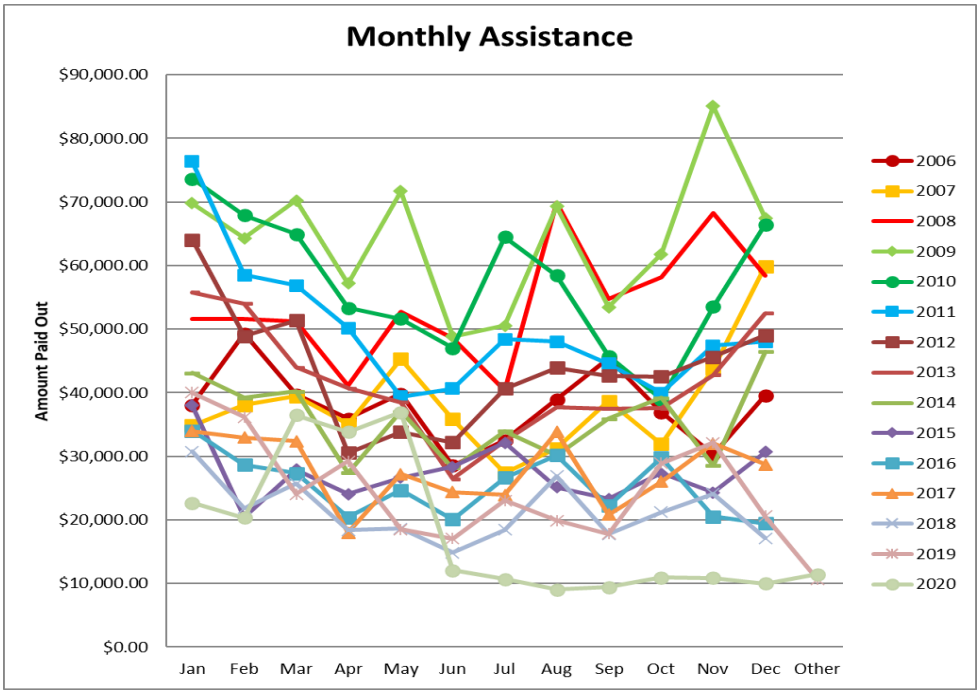
The Medina County Veterans Service Office provided relief for 358 Medina County Veterans and their families in CY2020.
New financial assistance clients made up almost 10% of the claims for CY 2020.



The following graph represents $241,281.12 in vouchers written for CY2020.



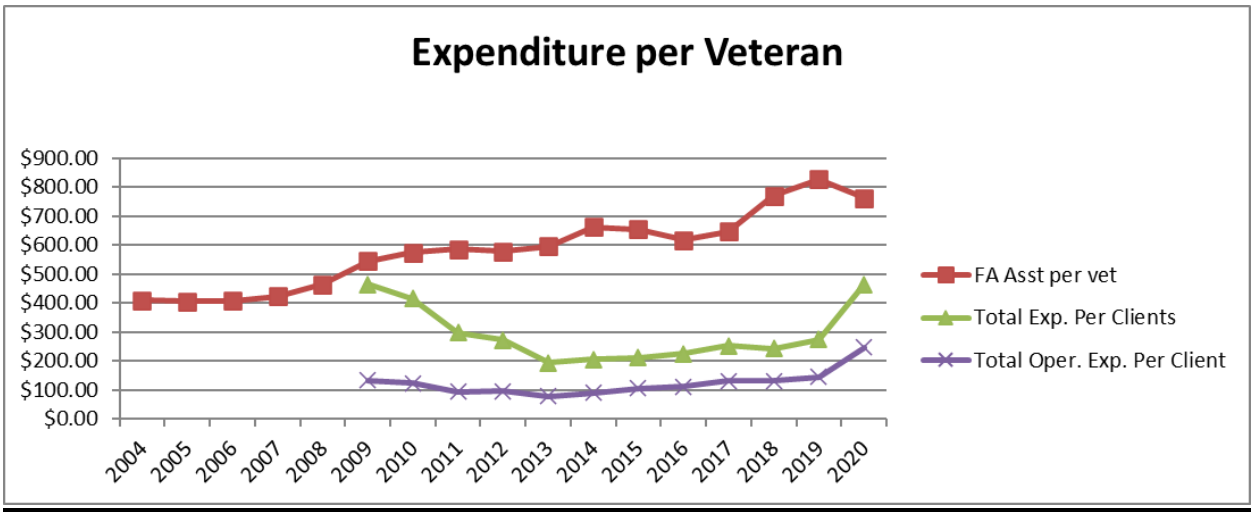
The following graph represents $234,789.15 in vouchers paid out for CY 2020.



Month / Year	Month	Year	Clients	Amount Paid Out $$	Amount Written $$	AVG clients	AVG Written $$	Min. Written $$	Max. Written $$	Avg $ Monthly
Jan-20	Jan	2020	37	$22,673.92	$23,961.16					$647.60
Feb-20	Feb	2020	35	$20,356.14	$21,856.34					$624.47
Mar-20	Mar	2020	47	$36,463.08	$39,608.54					$842.73
Apr-20	Apr	2020	48	$33,854.35	$36,787.01					$766.40
May-20	May	2020	54	$36,960.62	$41,213.74					$763.22
Jun-20	Jun	2020	22	$12,047.92	$8,650.21					$393.19
Jul-20	Jul	2020	11	$10,658.24	$5,449.80					$495.44
Aug-20	Aug	2020	17	$9,049.40	$10,818.40					$636.38
Sep-20	Sep	2020	15	$9,448.57	$10,130.40					$675.36
Oct-20	Oct	2020	18	$10,961.12	$9,640.09					$535.56
Nov-20	Nov	2020	20	$10,851.95	$10,814.59					$540.73
Dec-20	Dec	2020	16	$9,994.57	$10,881.57					$680.10
Appeals/Demands		2020	18	$11,469.27	$11,469.27					$637.18
Totals		**2020**	**358**	**$234,789.15**	**$241,281.12**	**28.33**	**$19,150.99**	**$5,449.80**	**$41,213.74**	**$673.97**

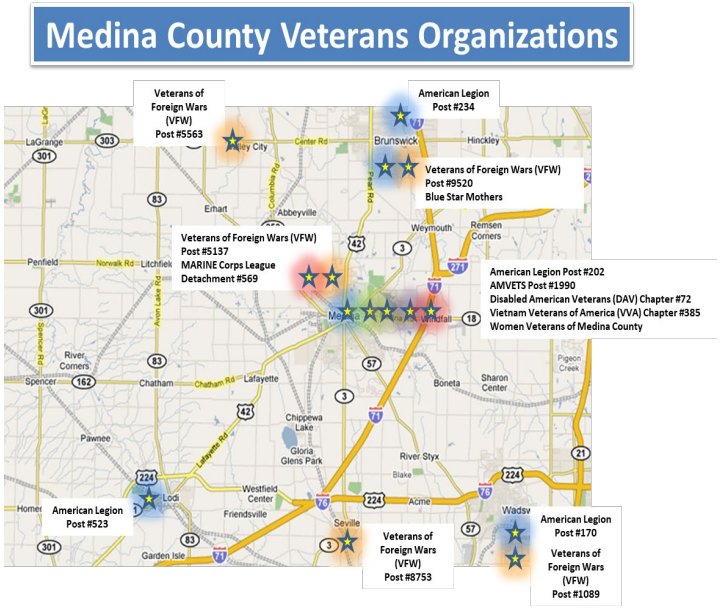
Our average dollar amount spent on financial assistance per Veteran was $673.97.

Additionally, $6,424.20 was paid out for dental services for Veterans through the Medina County Health Department. A total of twenty-three different veteran utilized this service for CY 2020.



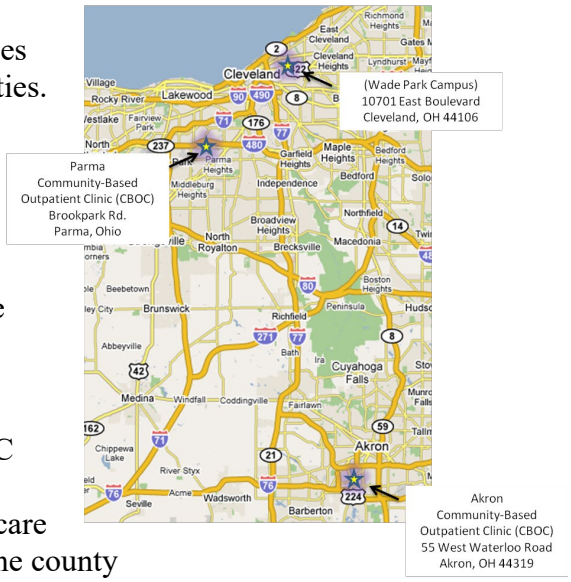
Veterans Organizations

Medina County has fifteen active veteran organizations throughout the county along with the Joint Veterans Coalition of Medina County. These organizations truly are on the front lines when it comes to helping Veterans and their dependents. Aside from the community involvement, they also provide meals, clothes and other much-needed resources. These organizations are key to our success, by referring veterans or assisting in our efforts to provide basic needs in a time of suffering. These various organizations are also, the ones from which the commissioners for the Medina County Veterans Service Commission are selected.



The Louis Stokes; VAMC-Cleveland VA Medical Center

Medical services provided to our Veterans at one of the many VA hospitals or Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) reduces the strain on local medical facilities. It also reduces the amount of dollars spent out of MEDICARE and MEDICAID since a large percentage of these Veterans maybe under the poverty level or have no Medical coverage. There has been an enormous increase since the affordable healthcare act was passed.



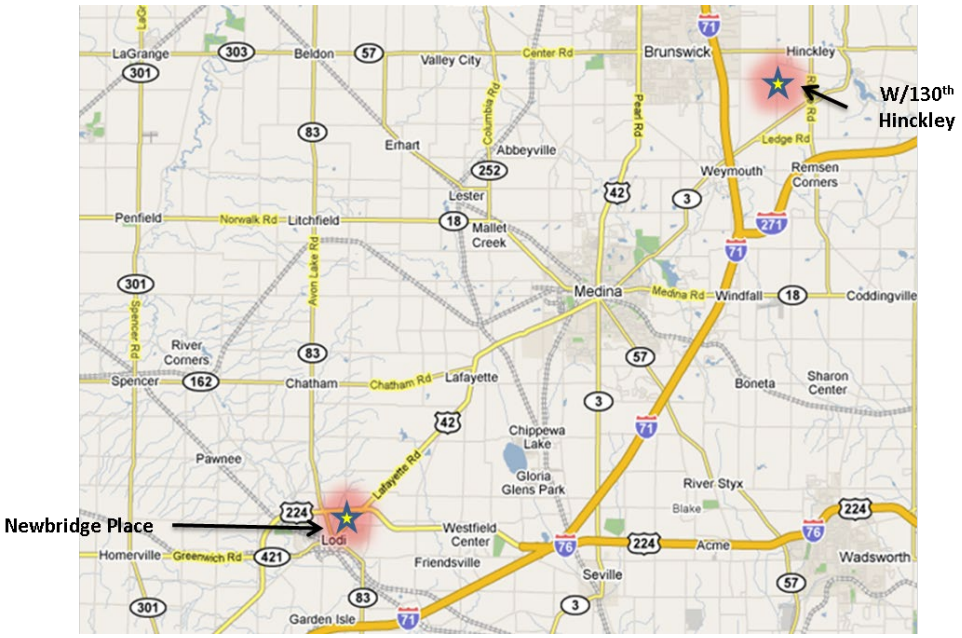
In 2020, we transported 551 Veterans to the VA Medical centers in Cleveland (Louis Stokes VAMC), Parma CBOC and Akron CBOC. If this service was not available, these veterans might not have been able to receive the medical care they needed and deserved. It also takes some burden off the county and community medical systems. We have recently added a wheelchair accessible van to the fleet and are utilizing it.

Vet Center:

- Eleven years ago, this coming May, we partnered with the Parma Vet Center and it has almost been seven years since we have provided space for a VA Vet Center here in Medina. Vet Centers provide FREE counseling to <u>all</u> combat veterans and their families. This has been a great service. Clinical Psychologist Aaron Reedy from the Westside Vet Center in Parma is at the Professional Building off the square every Monday and Wednesday. You can make an appointment by calling 440-845-5023 and telling them you would like an appointment in Medina.
- 244 Veterans have been seen in 2020. There is also a group session for Vietnam Veterans.
- They will be moving to the Medina County Office for Older Adults building as soon as they start doing in-person appointments again.

VA Medical Center Group Homes within Medina County

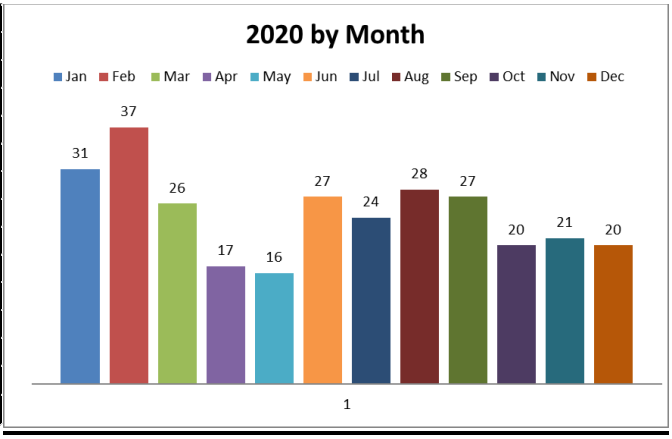
Our county currently has two group homes for Veterans that are monitored by the VA. They are:

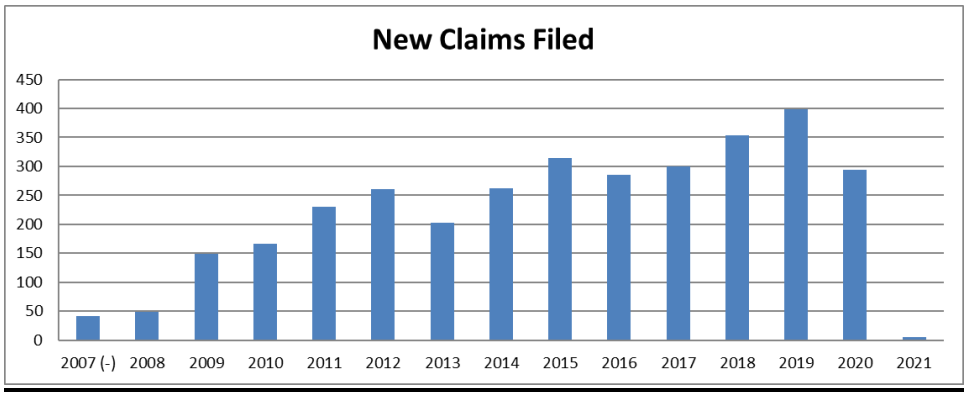


The VA also contracts with several nursing home within the county, our office has assisted them so that they may become certified and provide beds to eligible Veterans.

Number of New Claims Filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs

2020	
Month	New VA Claims
Jan	31
Feb	37
Mar	26
Apr	17
May	16
Jun	27
Jul	24
Aug	28
Sep	27
Oct	20
Nov	21
Dec	20
Total	**294**





Current Claim Log

Total Claim Inventory	
Pending Claim	195
Closed Claim	3971
Appeal	30
Not a Claim	528
Total	4724

Claim Status 2020	
Pending Claim	168
Closed Claim	220
Appeal	16
Not a Claim	54
Total:	458

VA Benefits Filed for Veterans and Their Spouses CY 2020 by the MCVSO

We filed 294/458 rating/total VA claims in 2020 along with 55 appeals or higher-level reviews and assisted 1,290 veterans and family members with paperwork for the VA. All together with van riders, immediate assistance, VA claims and ancillary benefits we made 1,841 appointments in 2020. These numbers are not a true reflection of the telephone and virtual appointments we have conducted. The workload has been steady, we have just figured out a different way to accomplish it. We have averaged upwards of 400 to 600 phone calls each month since the pandemic began last March.

Compensation & Pension:

- Last year we saw an increase in Compensation & Pension (C&P) expenditures ($32.4 to $39.2 million dollars) from the Department of Veterans Affairs within Medina County.

Education, Voc. Rehab & Insurance:

- $4.7 million dollars have been invested in our county's veterans through educational programs and payouts for insurance.

Medical:

- Last year $30.4 million dollars in medical expenditures from the Department of Veterans Affairs within Medina County.
- We continue this effort by promoting the VA Health Medical System. Currently we have filed more than 34 applications for medical benefits this year alone (86 total for 2019).

- We provided transportation to 305 veterans to the VA Medical Center in Cleveland, Parma and Akron. Currently we go to all three destinations five days a week.

***The VA spent $75.1 million dollars on the Veterans of Medina County in 2019, which is an increase of almost $6 million from the previous year.

Medina County Veterans Service Office

210 Northland Drive, Medina, OH 44256

EXPENDITURES FOR VETERANS

FEDERAL VS. COUNTY 2010-2019

		Federal VA Dollars Spent Within County [2]							County Veterans Budget Information	
		Prime Impact Areas					Other Impact Areas			
Fiscal Year	County Veteran Population [1]	Total Federal VA Dollars Spent Within County	Compensation & Pension	Education & Vocational Rehabilitation/ Employment	Insurance & Indemnities	Medical Care	General Operating Expenses	Construction	County Revenues authorized by ORC	County Revenues Spent [3, 4]
2010	13,858	$ 35,497,773.48	$ 16,321,349.81	$ 2,805,492.85	$ 1,027,596.50	$ 15,343,334.32	$ -	$ -	$ 2,392,590.00	$ 1,023,387.30
2011	13,878	$ 41,113,968.08	$ 20,087,979.68	$ 3,333,009.23	$ 1,417,265.17	$ 16,275,714.00	$ -	$ -	$ 2,254,685.66	$ 858,458.79
2012	13,908	$ 39,611,546.67	$ 18,487,542.00	$ 3,000,400.00	$ 941,696.02	$ 17,181,908.66	$ -	$ -	$ 2,273,439.01	$ 871,342.74
2013	13,677	$ 48,443,316.91	$ 23,467,866.00	$ 3,211,599.00	$ 1,069,515.34	$ 20,694,336.56	$ -	$ -	$ 2,273,439.01	$ 867,843.87
2014	13,609	$ 57,146,933.32	$ 30,640,493.00	$ 3,905,263.00	$ 889,226.65	$ 21,711,950.66	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251,844.64	$ 853,215.83
2015	13,420	$ 55,392,969.45	$ 29,476,754.00	$ 3,622,672.00	$ 673,200.00	$ 21,620,343.45	$ -	$ -	$ 2,273,439.01	$ 766,837.36
2016	12,421	$ 63,483,852.50	$ 33,609,021.50	$ 3,772,249.00	$ 1,062,202.00	$ 25,040,380.00	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251,844.60	$ 688,524.25
2017	12,157	$ 65,439,674.47	$ 33,074,100.78	$ 3,866,726.52	$ 1,554,901.00	$ 26,943,946.17	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251,844.64	$ 759,705.75
2018	11,890	$ 69,238,217.54	$ 32,496,438.00	$ 4,561,658.00	$ 1,112,475.00	$ 31,067,646.54	$ -	$ -	$ 2,591,316.74	$ 746,634.32
2019	11,351	$ 75,194,230.98	$ 39,216,959.00	$ 4,744,732.00	$ 781,261.00	$ 30,451,278.98	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251,844.64	$ 740,477.67

NOTES

[1] **Veteran Population** estimates are produced by the VA Office of the Actuary (VetPop 2007, 2011, 2014, 2016 & 2018)
In 2011, 2014, 2016, and 2018, the VA adjusted the Veterans Population Model to account for current projections of Veteran's life expectancies, gains, and population shifts. As a result, some Counties may show unanticipated increases and/or decreases in Veterans Populations.

[2] **Federal VA Dollars Spent Within County** - data pulled from the VA annual Summary of Expenditures By State reports (2010-2019) https://www.va.gov/vetdata/expenditures.asp

[3] **County Revenues Spent** - data pulled from individual county reports provided to ODVS annually by each county (2010-2019)

[4] Percent of .5 Mil expended in: Year 2019 32.88% Year 2018 28.81%

COUNTY REVENUES SPENT IN 2019 COMPARED TO 2010 IS AN INCREASE OF:	$282,909.63
TOTAL FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT WITHIN COUNTY INCREASED FROM '10-'19 BY:	$39,696,457.50
SINCE 2010, COUNTY VETERAN POPULATION HAS DECREASED BY:	2,507
2019 'FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT' TO 'COUNTY DOLLARS SPENT' =	102 to 1
TOTAL FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT WITHIN COUNTY INCREASED FROM 18-19 BY:	$5,956,013.44

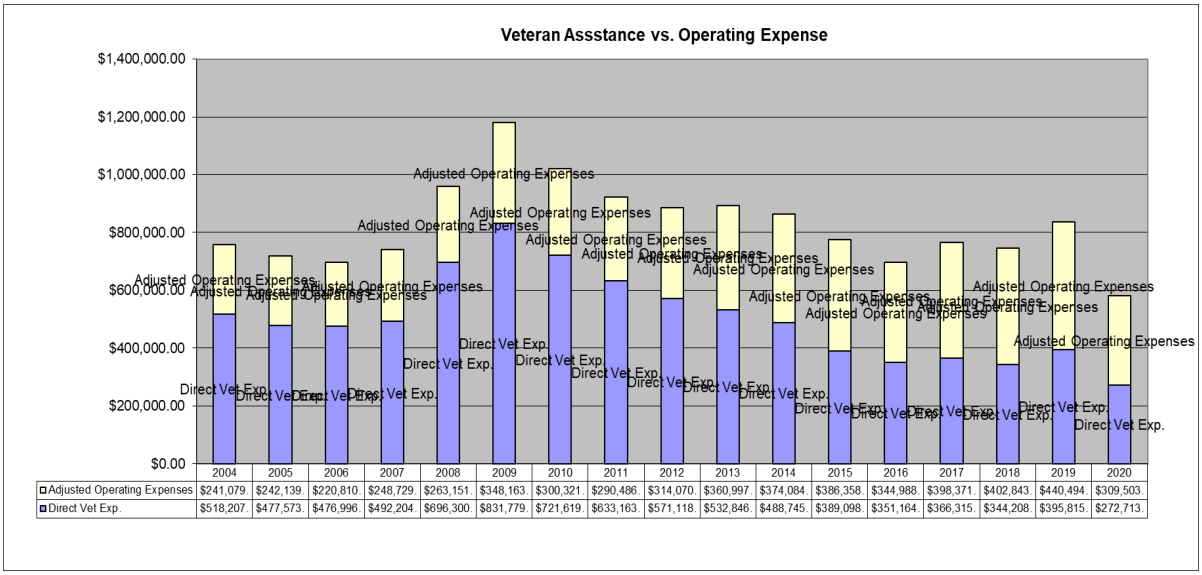
Document created by the Ohio Department of Veterans Services
please call 614-752-8942 with questions
July 2020

	2020	
	Vet	Other
VA & Federal Benefits		
VA POA	230	
Sup/HLR/COMP/DIC	213	17
Pension	17	19
NODAppeals	4	
Medical (1010 series)	49	
Other	41	
Marker	4	
Burial	12	
Memorial Certificate		22
Pre-Need Burial	36	
Discharge/Records NPRC	45	
ODVS	18	
DIPRIS	12	

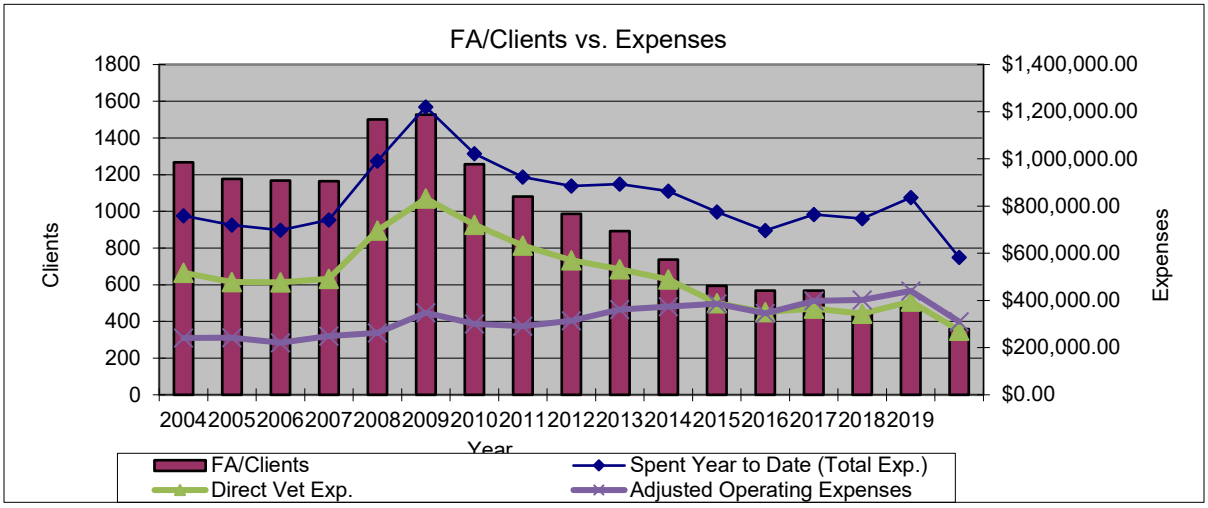
State Benefits		
OVH	2	
H. S. Diploma	1	
Ohio Bonus	18	0
MIRF	3	
County Benefits		
Financial Assistance (Clients)	309	
Financial Assistance (Families)	141	
Financial Assistance (NEW)	31	
Flag Cases		52
Indigent Burial		1
Van Riders	551	
Other		
Referrals		
Total Clients Seen	988	266
Vet Center	244	

Expenses

As we continue to see more Veterans and assist them with applying for the benefits, they have earned. We also have managed to keep our operating expenses relatively low. Our expenses slightly lower than the previous year.



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Adjusted Operating Expenses	$241,079	$242,139	$220,810	$248,729	$263,151	$348,163	$300,321	$290,486	$314,070	$360,997	$374,084	$386,358	$344,988	$398,371	$402,843	$440,494	$309,503
Direct Vet Exp.	$518,207	$477,573	$476,996	$492,204	$696,300	$831,779	$721,619	$633,163	$571,118	$532,846	$488,745	$389,098	$351,164	$366,315	$344,208	$395,815	$272,713



Summary

This past year has been anything but normal for our office and I do not believe anyone thought we would still be in the situation we continue to adapt to today. When the pandemic began last March, we closed our doors to the public and adapted our financial assistance program to be able to provide for multiple months so as to limit the amount of contact. We thought we would see a spike in financial assistance which we did those first two months, but as other sources of help from the state and federal government (i.e. unemployment, full SNAP benefits) were implemented, ours declined considerably. What hasn't changed is the service we provide to our veterans and eligible

family members in assisting them with other benefits from a multitude of sources. We opened back up to the public and then had to close again in October due to the spike and a number of COVID cases within the office. We remain closed to the public except to gather needed signatures in some cases. Our goal as a small office is to keep our personal healthy in order to continue to provide these services. There was a point in November where we had to stop everything for a period of ten-days. I make no predictions going forward other than we will strive to maintain the high quality of service the Veterans of Medina County and their families have become accustomed to.

Our office ensures the veterans of our county receive the maximum benefits they are due by law. The amount of money that our veterans receive from benefits each year significantly reduces the strain on both state and county funds. Each veteran or widow that receives a VA pension or compensation check has an increased income, which brings dollars into our county. VA benefits also help pay for assisted living or in-home healthcare for our senior veterans and their widows. This reduces the amount of assistance that other county agencies have to provide our Veterans and their widows.

Outreach Events Not Conducted In 2020:

1. Nursing home and assisted living briefings (2)
2. Senior Center briefings Medina, Wadsworth and Brunswick (1ea.)
3. Benefits briefings at Veterans organizations throughout Medina County (4)
4. Senior Fair, Medina, Wadsworth and Brunswick (1ea)
5. Power Piston Show IX Center
6. Senior panels (3)
7. Medina County Fair & Veterans Day at the Fair
8. Armed Forces Day Bar-B-Cue
9. Wadsworth Blue-Tip Parade
10. Medina Memorial Day Parade
11. Vietnam Veterans Day Breakfast

We have conducted several virtual briefings and meetings with county organizations in order to maintain a presence with the community we serve. Our partnership with the various county agencies has been a great success in not only finding our veterans and connecting them with their benefits, but also in combating fraud and savings in duplication of services.

In 2020, we spent less than $2,500 on training for personal in our office. Most all of the mandated training was waived by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the State of Ohio for 2020. Some of this training is state mandated or so we can maintain our accreditations. If it were not for the training our office receives and the in-house training program we have developed, we would not be able to provide the level of expertise to our clients that we do.

We currently have three accredited personnel and are currently accredited with 7 organizations through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) through:

1. American Legion
2. American Veterans (AMVETS)
3. Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
4. National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO)
5. Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS)

6. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
7. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

This enables us to file a claim through the VA and then have access to the Veterans file, both telephonically and over the web. This has required extensive training for our staff on federal guidelines and privacy policies. This is an enormous benefit to our veterans and their families and saves us much time when navigating the claim file to find out if there are any problems. We recently had two of our accredited service offices go through and become certified to do appeals before the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) in Washington DC.

Our two ongoing objectives are:

1. Ensure that the veterans of the County are aware of the benefits that they are due and that they receive those benefits, whether they are federal, state, or county benefits,

and

2. Continue to work with and grow a network throughout the County so that the citizens understand the accomplishments of the veterans and the successes they will bring to Medina County in the future.

We continue to strive to ensure that the taxpayer's money is used in a fiscally responsible way.

In the current environment no one knows where the economy is headed in the near future and our budget for 2021 accordingly is a reflection of this unknown. We planned for the worst in financial assistance by making cuts in other areas in order to do so. Although we have not seen the need as of yet and hopefully will not, prudent planning on behalf of taking care of our veterans is always good planning. We continue to find new and innovative ways to assist our veterans and their families.

With record numbers of Veterans becoming aware of and applying for benefits along with the aging population of our Vietnam Veterans, we must continue to ensure that we can provide the expertise when applying for Veterans Benefits. We will continue to provide the much-needed assistance that our veterans and their family members deserve as well as continue to operate in a conservative manner. The needs of our veterans are the utmost important thing we do when reaching any decision. I know it is with great credit to the Medina County Veterans Service Commission as well as the Medina County Commissioners and their Administration that our veterans and their families will continue to receive the much-needed assistance that they deserve.

Respectfully
Edward Zackery
Director/Veterans Service Officer
Medina County, Ohio