Jim Hoessle President	VACANT Commissioner	Phillip Grassa Vice President	Mark Roberts Secretary	John Lawrence Commissioner

Veterans Service Office | Medina County, Ohio
End of Year Brief, CY 2023

February 2024

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 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.

Veterans Service Commission
Medina County, Ohio

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
- Transportation to and from VA Medical Centers in Cleveland (Wade Park), Parma and Akron, Ohio
- 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
- Dental Program in partnership with the Medina County Health Department

Service Assistance:

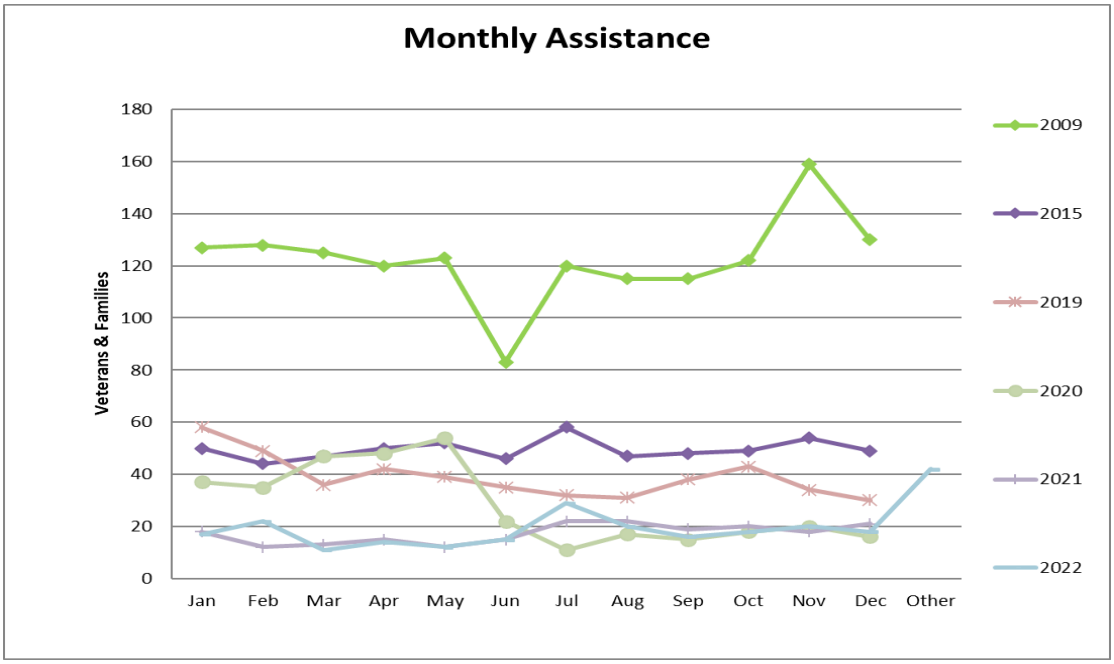
- Proper submission of claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Representation at the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA)
- Preparations of forms and paperwork
- Documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Submission for records, awards decorations and medals
- DD 214 certification
- Employment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

Our services are FREE of charge!

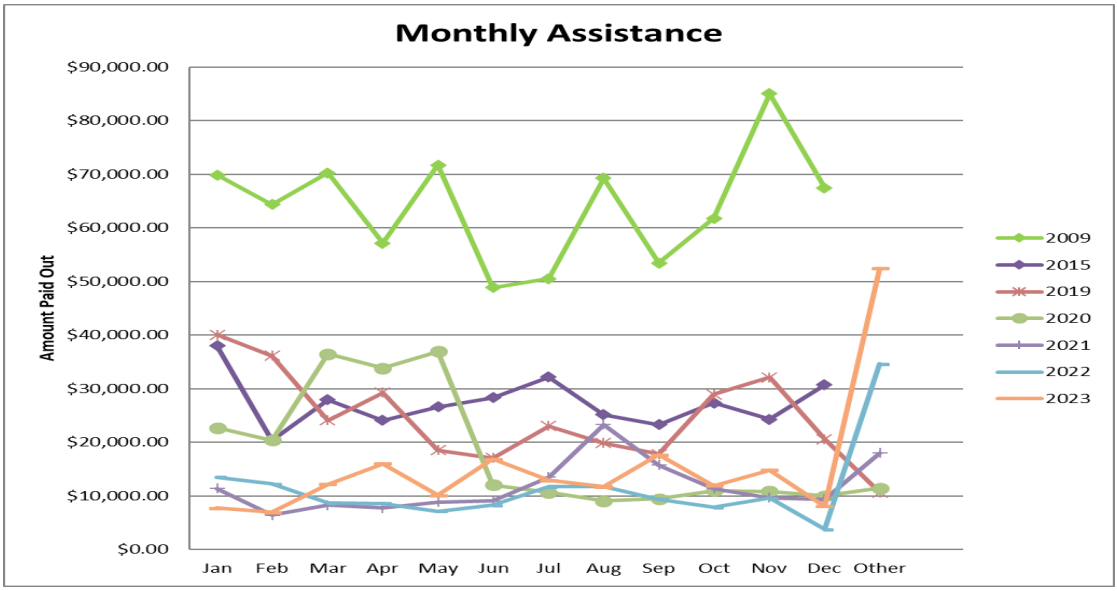
Assistance Program

The Medina County Veterans Service Office provided relief for 219/79 Medina County Veterans and their families in CY2023.

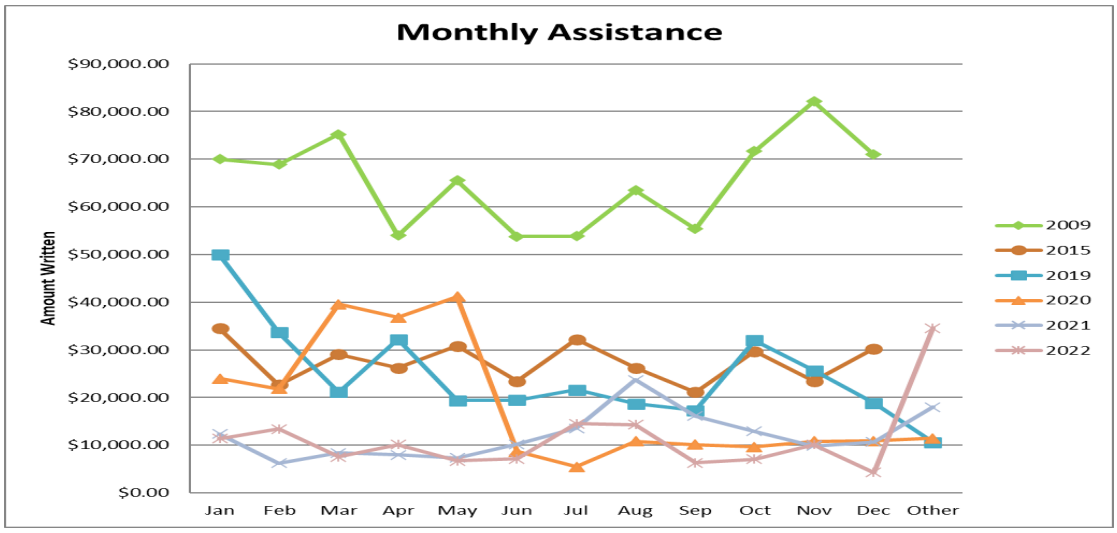
New financial assistance clients made up almost 15% of the claims for CY 2023.



The following graph represents $199,560.28 in vouchers written for CY2023.



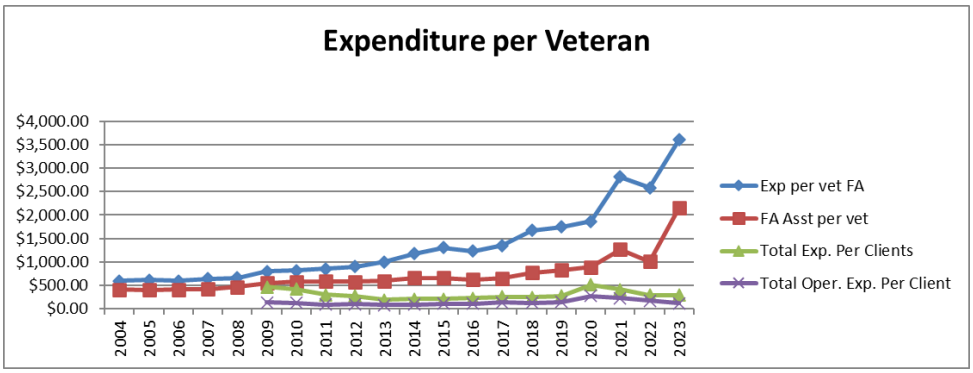
The following graph represents $192,676.34 in vouchers paid out for CY 2023.



Our average dollar amount spent on financial assistance per Veteran for 2023 was $911.23.

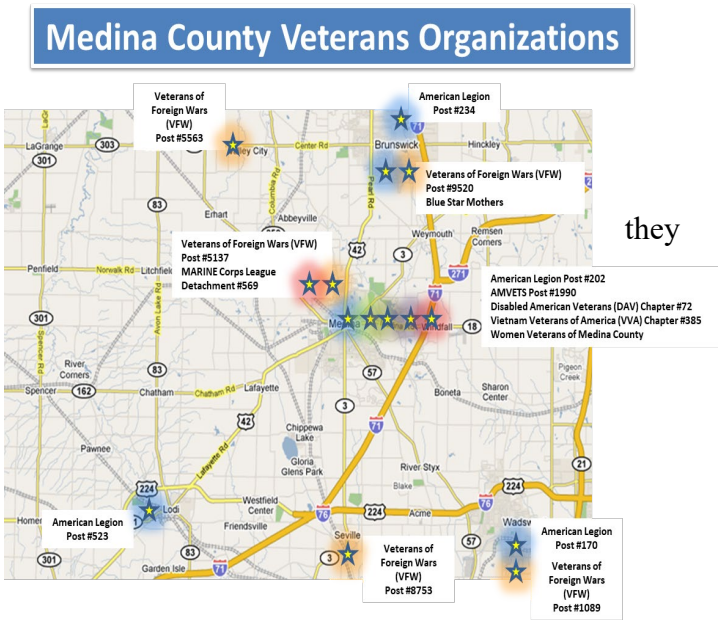
Month / Year	Month	Year	Clients	Amount Paid Out $$ (INCLUDES Appeals & Demands)	Amount Written $$	AVG clients	AVG Written $$	Min. Written $$	Max. Written $$	Avg $ Monthly	Remarks
Jan-23	Jan	2023	14	$7,425.16	$7,758.91					$554.21	
Feb-23	Feb	2023	12	$6,618.74	$6,912.36					$576.03	
Mar-23	Mar	2023	13	$10,986.54	$12,204.00					$938.77	
Apr-23	Apr	2023	30	$14,857.64	$16,040.06					$534.67	
May-23	May	2023	19	$8,956.81	$10,141.65					$533.77	
Jun-23	Jun	2023	22	$15,398.18	$16,908.32					$768.56	
Jul-23	Jul	2023	24	$11,603.65	$12,903.91					$537.66	
Aug-23	Aug	2023	18	$13,864.49	$11,738.93					$652.16	
Sep-23	Sep	2023	19	$14,429.35	$17,656.22					$929.27	
Oct-23	Oct	2023	16	$12,587.89	$11,907.29					$744.21	
Nov-23	Nov	2023	17	$11,939.08	$14,847.65					$873.39	
Dec-23	Dec	2023	15	$8,899.50	$8,100.87					$540.06	
Appeals/Demands	Other	2023	49	$52,440.11	$52,440.11					$1,070.21	
Dental & XMAS	Other	2023	25	$2,669.20							
Totals		**2023**	**219**	**$192,676.34**	**$199,560.28**	**18.25**	**$12,260.01**	**$6,912.36**	**$17,656.22**	**$911.23**	
	Individual Families:		79								
	Voucher Number:		1	444							

Additionally, $1,369.20 was spent for dental services for Veterans through the Medina County Health Department for CY 2023.



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 & CBOC's

Medical services provided to our Veterans at one of the many VA Medical Centers (VAMC) 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 these agencies do not pay VA.

In 2023, we transported 829 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 new wheelchair accessible van to the fleet and are utilizing it.

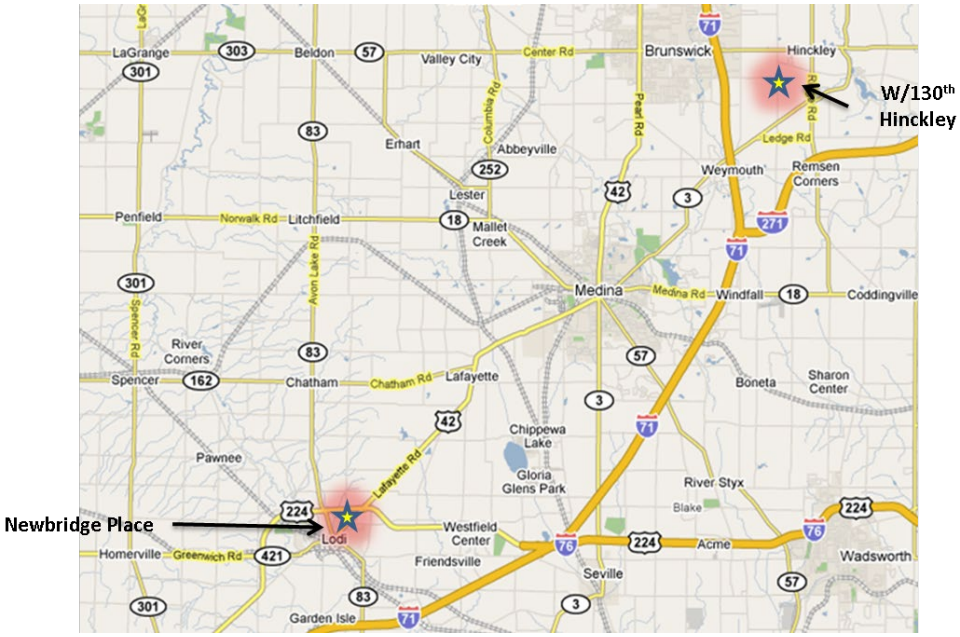
Additionally, we contracted with MCPT which provided 2,290 rides throughout 2023.

Vet Center:

- It has been fourteen years ago, this coming May, we partnered with the Parma Vet Center, and have provided space for a VA Vet Center here in Medina. Vet Centers provide FREE counseling to all combat veterans and their families. This has been a great service. Two Clinical Psychologist from the Westside Vet Center in Parma is at the Medina County Office for Older Adults building every Monday and Wednesday. You can make an appointment by calling 440-845-5023 and telling them you would like an appointment in Medina.
- 208 Veterans have been seen in 2023. There is also a group session for Vietnam & OIF/OEF Veterans.

VA Medical Center Group Homes within Medina County

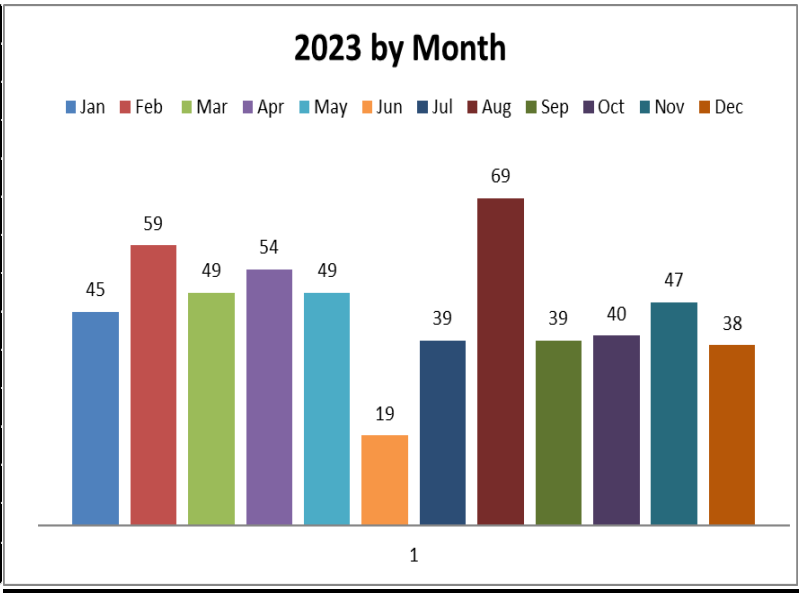
Our county currently has two group homes for Veterans that are monitored by the VA. They are:

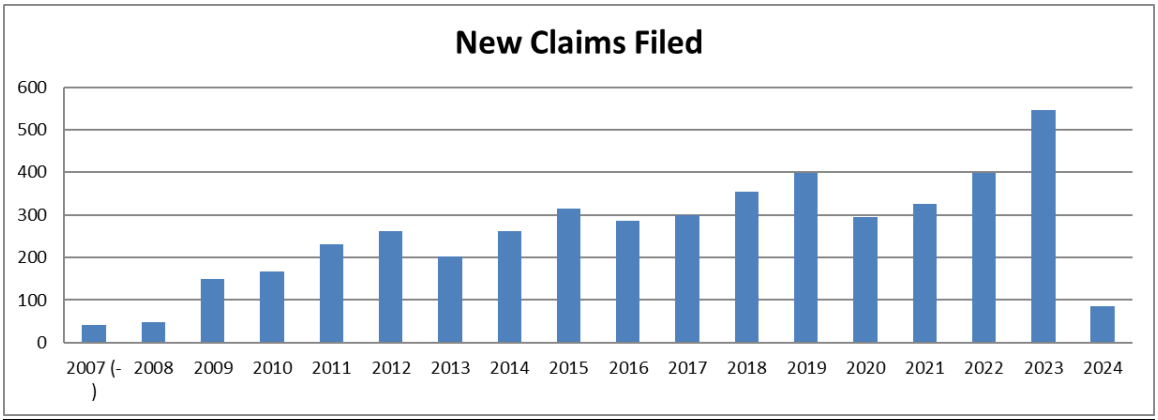


The VA also contracts with several nursing homes within the county, our office has assisted them so that they may become certified and provide beds to eligible Veterans.

Number of New Claims Filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs

2023	
Month	New VA Claims
Jan	45
Feb	59
Mar	49
Apr	54
May	49
Jun	19
Jul	39
Aug	69
Sep	39
Oct	40
Nov	47
Dec	38
Total	**547**





Current Claim Log

Total Claim Inventory	
Pending Claim	393
Closed Claim	5841
Appeal	24
Not a Claim	717
Total	6975

Claim Status 2023		Claim Status 2024	
Pending Claim	277	Pending Claim	111
Closed Claim	554	Closed Claim	13
Appeal	5	Appeal	0
Not a Claim	81	Not a Claim	5
Total:	917	**Total:**	129

VA Benefits Filed for Veterans and Their Spouses CY 2023 by the MCVSO

We filed 547/917 (rating/total) VA claims in 2023 along with 103 appeals or higher-level reviews and assisted 2,480 veterans and family members with paperwork for the VA. All together with van riders, immediate assistance, VA claims and ancillary benefits we had 2,700 appointments in 2023. These numbers do not include the telephone and virtual appointments we have conducted.

Geographical Distribution of VA Expenditures in Medina County

		Federal VA Dollars Spent Within County [2]							County Veterans Budget Information	
		Prime Impact Areas					Other Impact Areas			
Fiscal Year	County Veteran Population,	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	$ 16,321349.81	$ 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	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251844.64	$ 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	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251844.60	$ 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	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251844.64	$ 759,705.75
2018	11,890	$ 69,238,217.54	$ 32,496,438.00	$ 4,561658.00	$ 1,112,475.00	$ 31,067,646.54	$ -	$ -	$ 2,591316.74	$ 746,634.32
2019	11,351	$ 75,194,230.98	$ 39,216,959.00	$ 4,744,732.00	$ 781,261.00	$ 30,451278.98	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251844.64	$ 740,477.67
2020	11,285	$ 80,232,000.58	$ 41451000.67	$ 4,628,000.10	$ 682,000.49	$ 33,470,000.32	$ -	$ -	$ 2,251844.64	$ 665,736.75
2021	11,218	$ 84,434,000.59	$ 44,974,000.98	$ 3,751000.12	$ 895,000.35	$ 34,812,000.15			$ 2,953,100.00	$ 652,291.15
2022	10,268	$ 100,404,000.96	$ 55,185,000.46	$ 3,079,000.92	$ 592,000.10	$ 38,450,000.12			$ 2,953,100.00	$ 628,421.01

NOTES

1 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 Expenditures - National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (va.gov)

3

4 Percent of .5 Mil expended in: Year 2022 21.00% Year 2021 20.00%

COUNTY REVENUES SPENT IN 2022 COMPARED TO 2010 IS AN DECREASE OF:	*$394,966.29*
TOTAL FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT WITHIN COUNTY INCREASED FROM '10-'22 BY:	*$64,906,227.48*
SINCE 2010, COUNTY VETERAN POPULATION HAS DECREASED BY:	3,590
2022 'FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT' TO 'COUNTY DOLLARS SPENT' =	*159 to 1*
TOTAL FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT WITHIN COUNTY INCREASED FROM 21-22 BY:	*$15,970,000.37*

***The VA spent over $100 million dollars on the Veterans of Medina County in 2022, we expect that when the GDX comes out for 2023 in May that we will see an increase.

ODVS:

Veterans Bonus

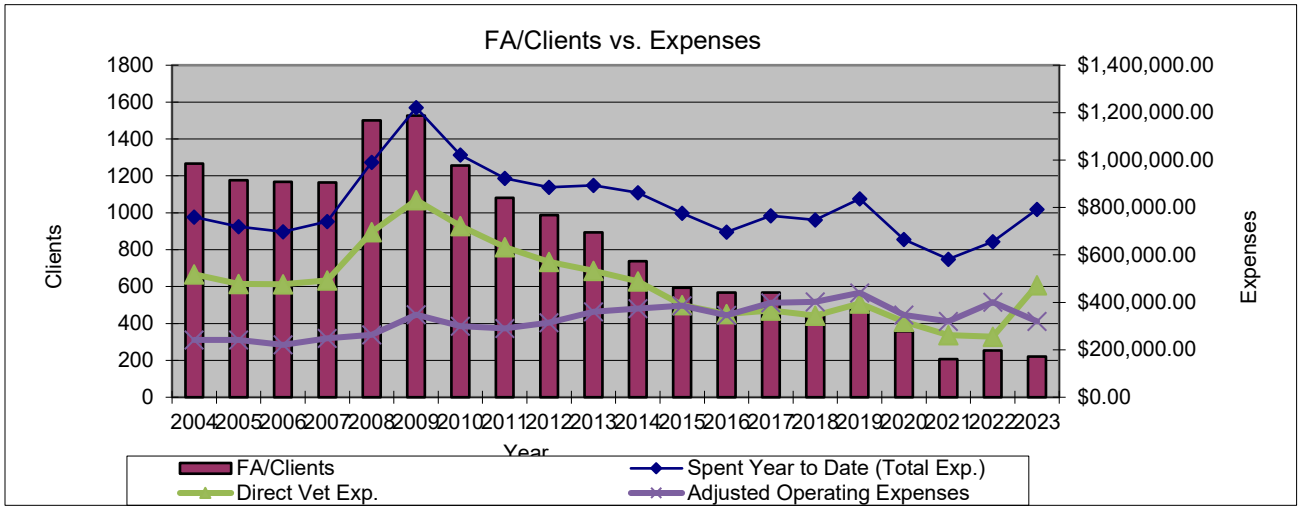
Number of Claims Paid	Total Paid
1	$

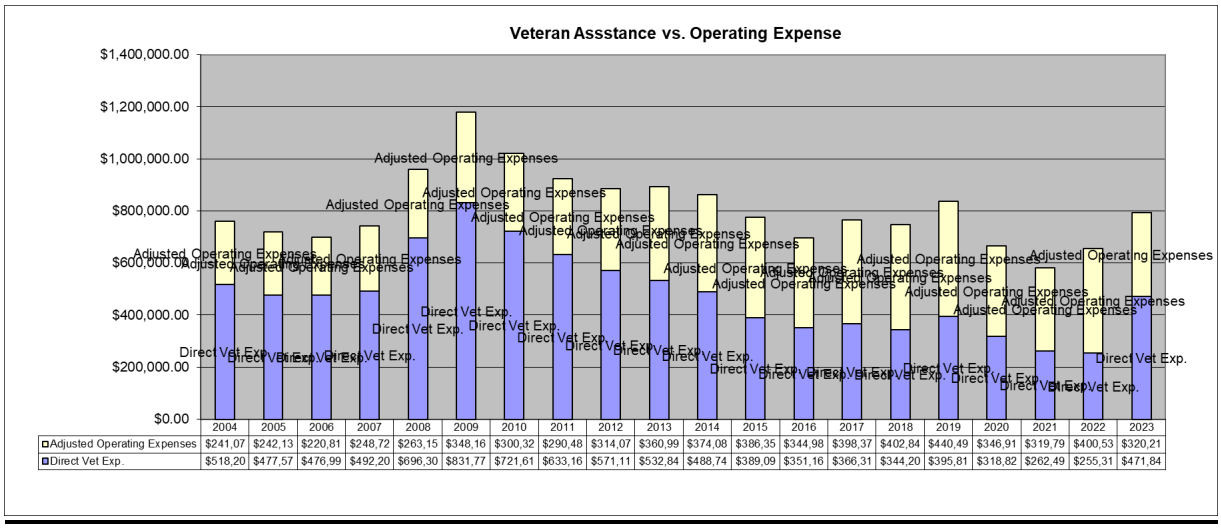
MIRF

Number of Claims Paid	Total Paid
1	$500.00

Expenses

Although we continue to see and assist more veterans, we have also managed to keep our operating expenses relatively low. Our expenses are higher than the previous year, due to the construction.





	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Adjusted Operating Expenses	$241,07	$242,13	$220,81	$248,72	$263,15	$348,16	$300,32	$290,48	$314,07	$360,99	$374,08	$386,35	$344,98	$398,37	$402,84	$440,49	$346,91	$319,79	$400,53	$320,21
Direct Vet Exp.	$518,20	$477,57	$476,99	$492,20	$696,30	$831,77	$721,61	$633,16	$571,11	$532,84	$488,74	$389,09	$351,16	$366,31	$344,20	$395,81	$318,82	$262,49	$255,31	$471,84

Summary

The year 2023 started out operationally much like pre-COVID years had. Although we still have precautions in place, we were open and operational in the same manner as prior years.
We were able to provide all the services we normally would have as well as add a few services we felt our Veterans needed. Our new wheelchair accessible bus which went into service January 1, 2023 has been extremely useful and we will be completing the purchase of a similar bus minus the wheelchair accessibility this week. Our overall financial assistance increased slightly due to the 100% SNAP benefits which stopped being provided this past year (ended January 2023).

We are moving forward with the building groundbreaking which I hope you will all be apart of and will be closed March 5, 6 and 7 and reopen on the 8 in the temporary location.

What's changed, changing or will change? Our current staffing, we now have another fully accredited CVSO and new office manager. We are looking for a community/outreach and program coordinator.

We have been extremely busy with the implementation of the Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (The PACT Act) which started in January 2023 and will again expand next month. The PACT Act, which is the largest piece of veteran's legislation to be passed since the Agent Orange Act back in the early nineties and expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits. It has impacted hundreds of thousands of veterans and their survivors.

What hasn't changed is the service we provide for our veterans and eligible family members in assisting them with other benefits from a multitude of sources. Our goal as a medium-sized county is to keep our personnel trained and knowledgeable on the rapidly changing issues that affect our veterans in order to continue to provide these services.

Our office continues to ensure 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 surviving spouses. This also reduces the amount of assistance that other county agencies have to provide them.

Outreach Events Conducted In 2023:

1. Nursing home and assisted living briefings
2. Benefits briefings at veterans' organizations throughout Medina County
3. Medina County Fair & Veterans Day at the Fair
4. Sr. Fairs
5. Quaker Steak Auto Nights
6. Speaking engagements at civic organizations

We have conducted several briefings and meetings with county organizations in order to maintain a presence with the community and educate veterans and those that serve them. 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 eliminating the duplication of services. We also have several events planned for this year.

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):

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 online. 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 currently have only one accredited service officer trained to 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.

Our planning factor for the future continues to be one that ensures we can provide the continued service and financial support for our Veterans and their families within Medina County. We spent 65% of our appropriated budget last year and returned more than $400,000.00 back to the general fund. Our 2024 budget continues to reflect a reserve in the event of a catastrophic financial crisis, or a turn of events within our community as well as provide for completing construction costs and staffing.

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 veteran's 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 most important thing we consider when making 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