Jim Hoessle
President

Curt Schwehm
Commissioner

Phillip Grassa
Vice President

Mark Roberts
Secretary

John Lawrence
Commissioner

# Veterans Service Office | Medina County, Ohio
# End of Year Brief, CY 2024

## February 2025

## Our Pledge

When you come to 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 spouses, 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:**

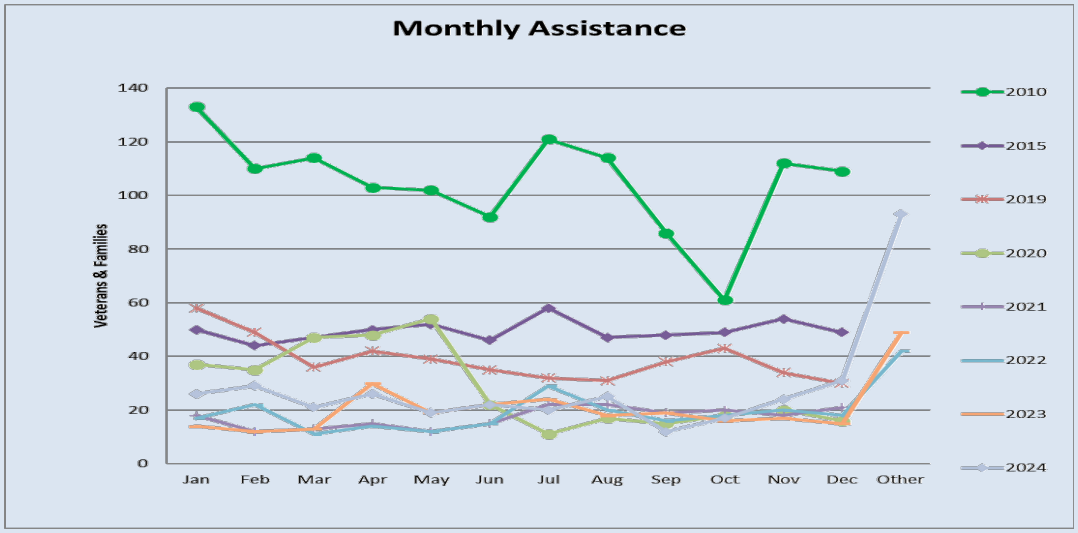
a. Financial Assistance:
    i. Rent and mortgage payments
    ii. Utilities: gas, electric, water, cellular phone and internet
    iii. Food and personal hygiene items
    iv. Certain medical
    v. Other emergency items as determined by the Commission
b. Transportation to and from VA Medical Centers in Cleveland (Louis Stokes VAMC), Parma and Akron, Ohio
c. Grave markers and flags
d. Free notary for Veterans & families
e. Veterans Identification Cards (unofficial) through the Medina County Recorder's Office
f. Free transportation on the Medina County Public Transit (MCPT) with proper ID
g. Dental Program in partnership with the Medina County Health Department
h. Service Assistance:
    i. Proper submission of claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
    ii. Representation at the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA)
    iii. Preparations of forms and paperwork
    iv. Documentation of claims and pertinent data
    v. Submission for records, awards decorations and medals
    vi. DD214 certification
    vii. Employment resources (website)

***Our services are FREE of charge!***

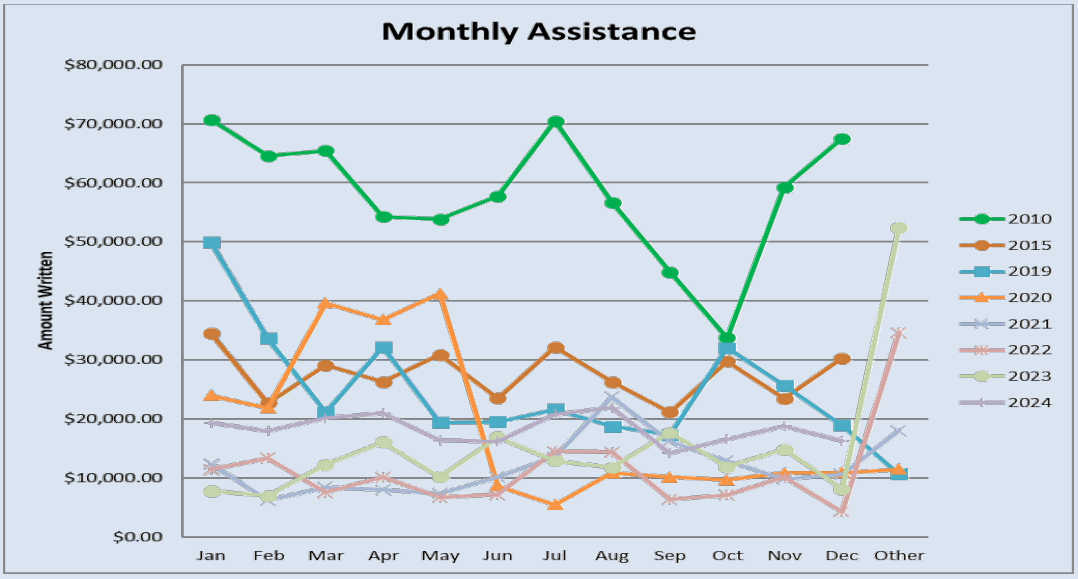
# Immediate Assistance Program

The Medina County Veterans Service Office provided immediate financial relief for 365 veterans and 99 Medina County families in CY2024.

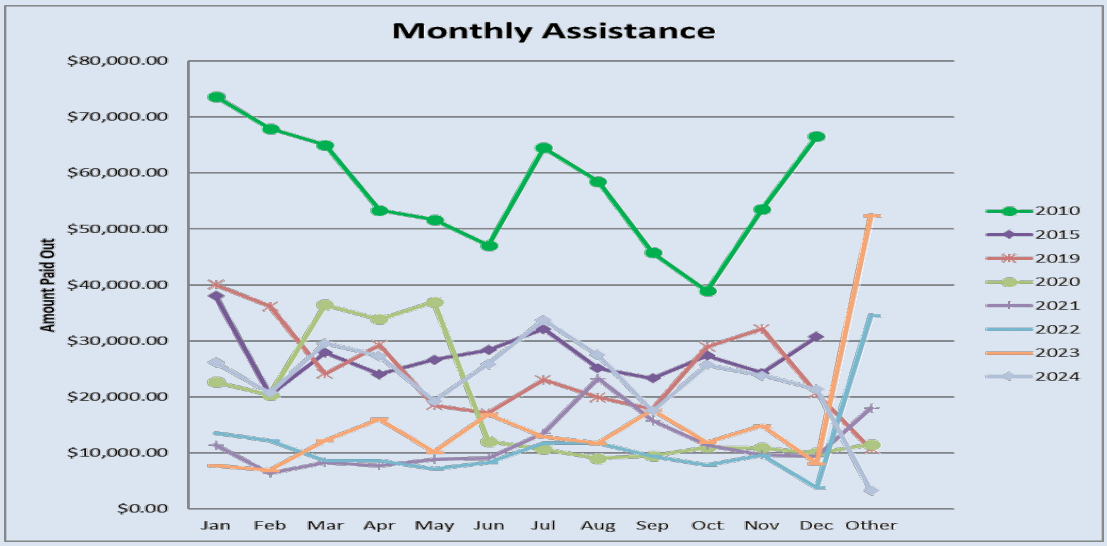
An increase of 65% of the claims for CY 2024.




The following graph represents $317,557.54 in vouchers written for CY2024.



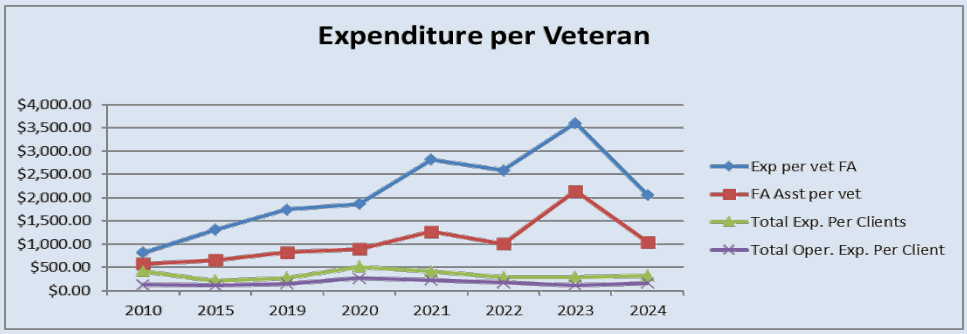
The following graph represents $312,443.93 in vouchers paid out for CY 2024




Our average amount spent on financial assistance per Veteran/family for 2024 was $870.02.

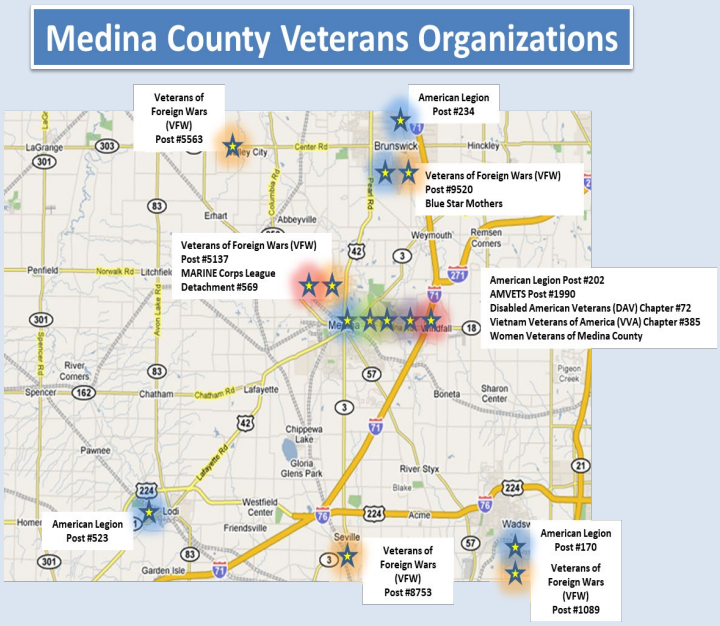
| Month / Year | Month | Year | Clients | Amount Paid Out $$ (INCLUDES Appeals & Demands) | Amount Written $$ | AVG clients | AVG Written $$ | Min. Written $$ | Max. Written $$ | Avg $ Monthly | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jan-24 | Jan | 2024 | 26 | $26,137.47 | $29,372.86 | | | | | $1,129.73 | |
| Feb-24 | Feb | 2024 | 29 | $20,739.56 | $22,460.56 | | | | | $774.50 | |
| Mar-24 | Mar | 2024 | 21 | $29,542.85 | $33,186.80 | | | | | $1,580.32 | |
| Apr-24 | Apr | 2024 | 26 | $27,277.84 | $27,631.67 | | | | | $1,062.76 | |
| May-24 | May | 2024 | 19 | $19,252.54 | $19,688.94 | | | | | $1,036.26 | |
| Jun-24 | Jun | 2024 | 22 | $25,845.51 | $25,986.57 | | | | | $1,181.21 | |
| Jul-24 | Jul | 2024 | 20 | $33,674.06 | $35,040.55 | | | | | $1,752.03 | |
| Aug-24 | Aug | 2024 | 25 | $27,495.72 | $30,065.94 | | | | | $1,202.64 | |
| Sep-24 | Sep | 2024 | 12 | $17,509.51 | $17,114.75 | | | | | $1,426.23 | |
| Oct-24 | Oct | 2024 | 17 | $25,682.82 | $22,272.93 | | | | | $1,310.17 | |
| Nov-24 | Nov | 2024 | 24 | $23,805.95 | $28,297.34 | | | | | $1,179.06 | |
| Dec-24 | Dec | 2024 | 31 | $21,371.32 | $26,438.63 | | | | | $852.86 | |
| Dental, other | Other | 2024 | 93 | $3,251.80 | | | | | | | |
| **Totals** | | **2024** | **365** | **$301,586.95** | **$317,557.54** | **22.67** | **$26,463.13** | **$17,114.75** | **$35,040.55** | **$870.02** | |
| | **Individual Families:** | | 99 | | | | | | | | |
| | **Voucher Number:** | | 1 | 674 | | | | | | | |

Additionally, $1,751.80 was spent on dental services for Veterans through the Medina County Health Department for CY 2024.



## 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 the 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) reduce 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 2024, we transported 827 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.

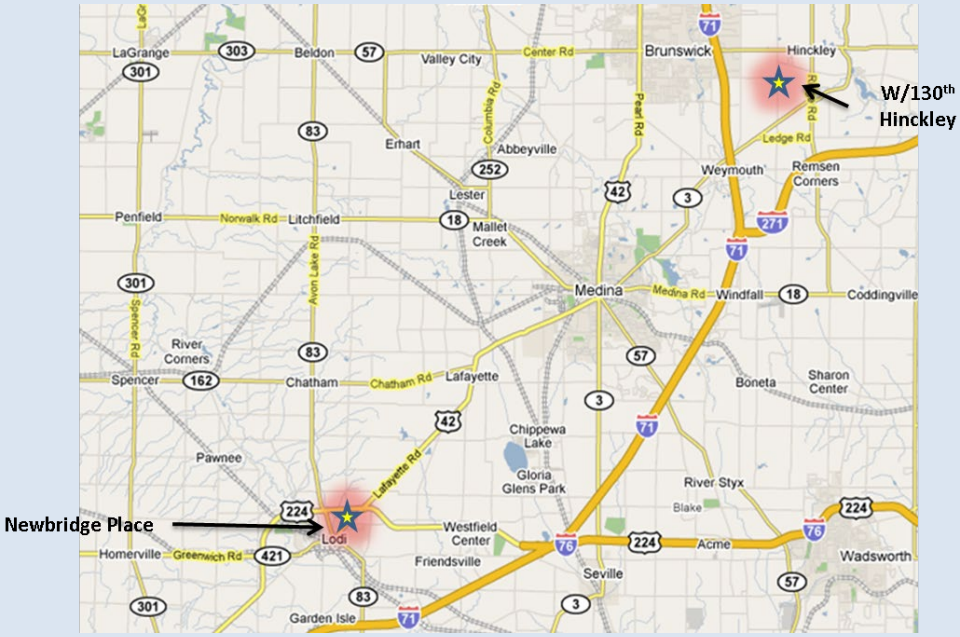
Additionally, we contracted with MCPT, which provided 2,159 rides throughout CY2024.

**Vet Center:**

- It has been fifteen years ago, this coming May, that 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 are at the Medina County Office for Older Adults building every Monday and Wednesday. Veterans can make an appointment by calling (440) 845-5023 and stating they would like an appointment in Medina.
- 247 Veterans have been seen in CY2024. There is also a group session for Vietnam & OIF/OEF Veterans.

## VA Medical Center Group Homes within Medina County

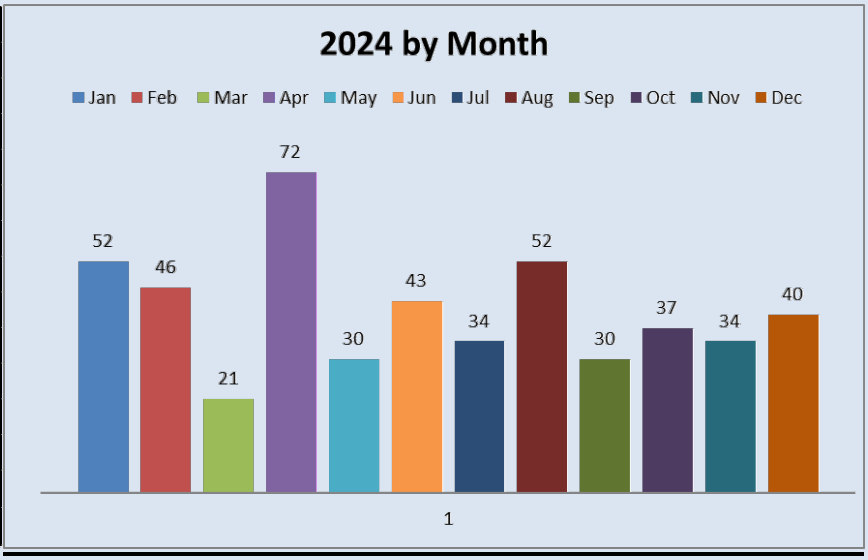
Our county currently has two group homes for Veterans that are monitored by the VA. They are:

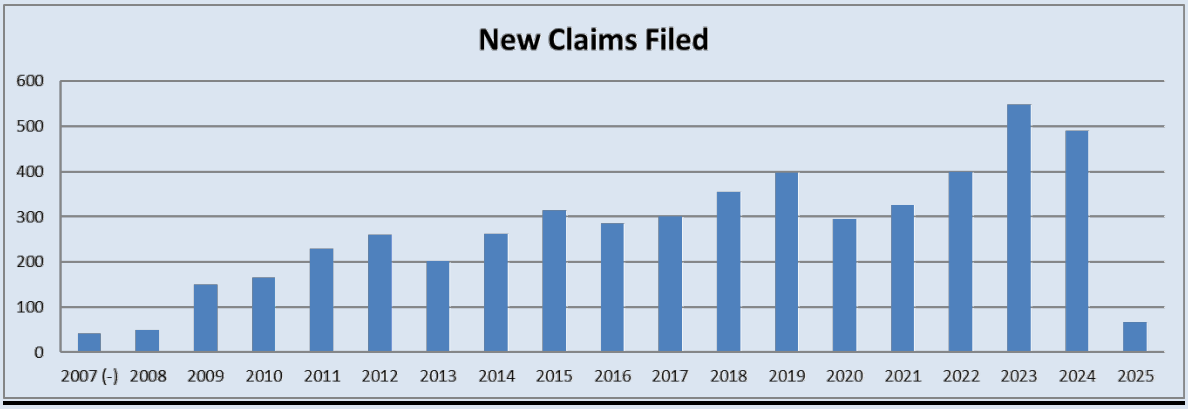



The VA also contracts with several nursing homes within the county, our office has assisted them so that they may become certified and provide beds to eligible Veterans. We continue to work with the veterans and eligible family members so that they continue to receive the veterans benefits they are eligible for.

## Number of New Claims Filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs

| 2024 | |
|---|---|
| Month | New VA Claims |
| Jan | 52 |
| Feb | 46 |
| Mar | 21 |
| Apr | 72 |
| May | 30 |
| Jun | 43 |
| Jul | 34 |
| Aug | 52 |
| Sep | 30 |
| Oct | 37 |
| Nov | 34 |
| Dec | 40 |
| **Total** | **491** |




## Current Claim Log

| Total Claim Inventory | |
|---|---|
| Pending Claim | 382 |
| Closed Claim | 6592 |
| Appeal | 19 |
| Not a Claim | 772 |
| **Total** | 7765 |

| Claim Status 2024 | |
|---|---|
| Pending Claim | 272 |
| Closed Claim | 455 |
| Appeal | 4 |
| Not a Claim | 58 |
| **Total:** | 789 |

| Claim Status 2025 | |
|---|---|
| Pending Claim | 95 |
| Closed Claim | 29 |
| Appeal | 1 |
| Not a Claim | 4 |
| **Total:** | 129 |

## VA Benefits Filed for Veterans and Their Spouses CY 2024 by the MCVSO

We filed 491/789 (rating/total) VA claims in CY2024 along with 90 appeals or higher-level reviews and assisted 2,317 veterans and family members with paperwork for the VA. All together with van riders, immediate assistance, VA claims and ancillary benefits we had 3,144 appointments in CY2024. These numbers do not include the telephone and virtual appointments we have conducted.

### Geographical Distribution of VA Expenditures in Medina County

**Medina County Veterans Service Office**

210 Northland Drive, Medina, OH 44256

**EXPENDITURES FOR VETERANS**

**FEDERAL VS. COUNTY 2014-2023**

| | | 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] |
| 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 |
| 2020 | 11,285 | $ 80,232,582.37 | $ 41,451,668.00 | $ 4,628,104.00 | $ 682,489.00 | $ 33,470,321.37 | $ - | $ - | $ 2,251,844.64 | $ 625,925.54 |
| 2021 | 11,218 | $ 84,433,589.29 | $ 44,974,981.00 | $ 3,751,119.00 | $ 895,340.00 | $ 34,812,149.29 | $ - | $ - | $ 2,953,100.00 | $ 652,291.15 |
| 2022 | 10,268 | $ 100,404,967.51 | $ 55,185,461.00 | $ 3,079,920.00 | $ 592,101.00 | $ 38,450,127.82 | $ 3,097,357.69 | $ - | $ 2,953,100.00 | $ 628,421.01 |
| 2023 | 10,085 | $ 112,103,526.54 | $ 60,549,144.00 | $ 3,428,240.00 | $ 370,377.00 | $ 44,502,705.16 | $ 3,253,060.38 | $ - | $ 2,953,100.00 | $ 792,065.58 |

**NOTES**

1 **Veteran Population** estimates are produced by the VA Office of the Actuary (VetPop 2011, 2014, 2016, 2018 & 2020)
Since 2011 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 (2014-2023) https://www.va.gov/vetdata/expenditures.asp

3 **County Revenues Spent** - data pulled from individual county reports provided to ODVS annually by each county (2014-2023)

4 Percent of .5 Mil expended in: Year 2023 26.82% Year 2022 21.28%

| | |
|---|---|
| COUNTY REVENUES SPENT IN 2023 COMPARED TO 2014 IS AN INCREASE OF: | $61,150.25 |
| TOTAL FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT WITHIN COUNTY INCREASED FROM '14-'23 BY: | $54,956,593.23 |
| SINCE 2014, COUNTY VETERAN POPULATION HAS DECREASED BY: | 3,525 |
| 2023 'FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT' TO 'COUNTY DOLLARS SPENT' = | 142 to 1 |
| TOTAL FEDERAL VA DOLLARS SPENT WITHIN COUNTY INCREASED FROM 22-23 BY: | $11,698,559.03 |

***The VA spent over $110 million dollars on the Veterans of Medina County in 2023, we expect that when the GDX comes out for 2024 in May that we will see that stabilize.

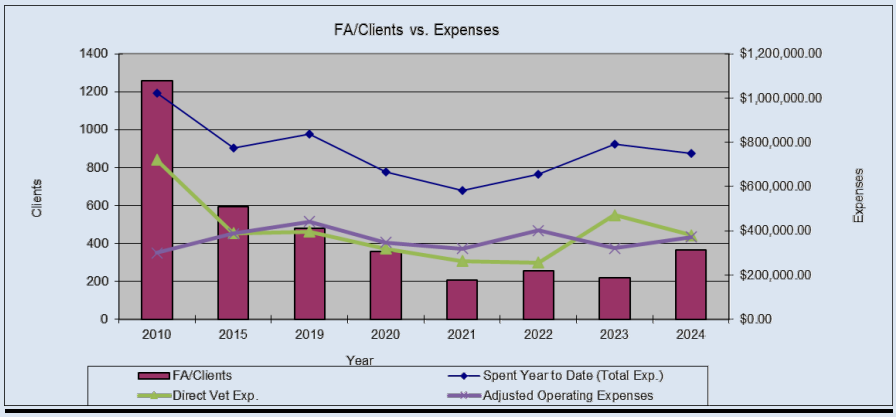
### Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS):

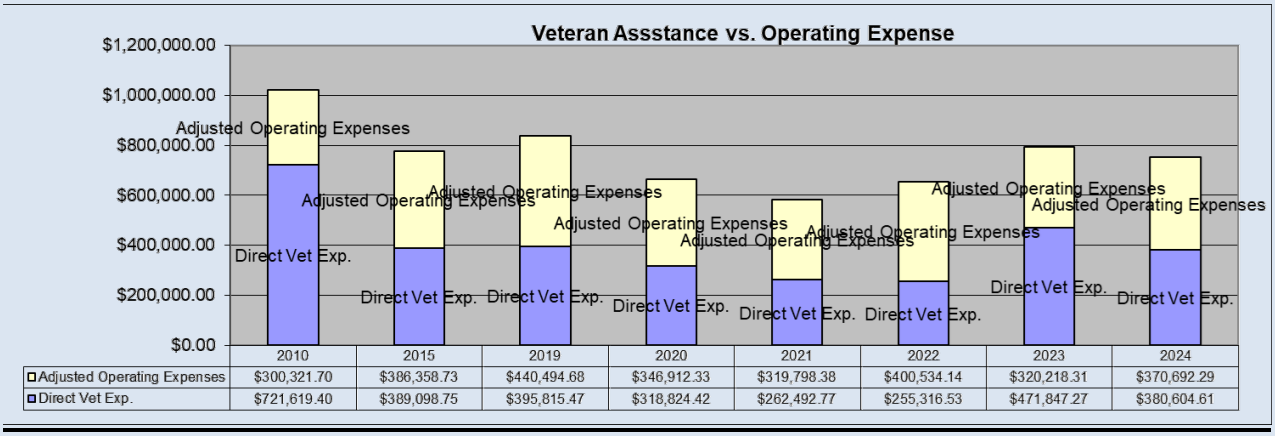
**Veterans Paid Claims during Calendar Year 2024**

| Program: | # Claims Paid | $ Paid |
|---|---|---|
| Military Injury Relief Fund | 8 | 4,000 |
| Veterans Bonus | 43 | 25,310 |
| **Total** | **51** | **29,310** |

## 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.




| | 2010 | 2015 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adjusted Operating Expenses | $300,321.70 | $386,358.73 | $440,494.68 | $346,912.33 | $319,798.38 | $400,534.14 | $320,218.31 | $370,692.29 |
| Direct Vet Exp. | $721,619.40 | $389,098.75 | $395,815.47 | $318,824.42 | $262,492.77 | $255,316.53 | $471,847.27 | $380,604.61 |

## Summary

The year 2024 started out operationally much the same as previous years except for the construction and relocation of the office.

We were able to provide all the services without disruption except for a few days during the move to and from.

The new space has provided us with opportunities not available to us in the past. First with the extreme winter this year 2024/25, the garage has been a blessing for our drivers and riders alike. The vehicles are clean and warm for our riders in the morning and departures take place without delay. The newly added community room has already been put into use for several events and we currently have (3) programs actively taking place along with other in the pipeline for this year.

Our overall financial assistance increased slightly from the previous year, from 219 to 365 applicants. We have currently adopted some policies to be able to work with the new shelter here in Medina and make sure we can assist with those veterans that may be accommodated there.

What's changed, changing or will change? Our current staffing is 100% with two new positions we added this past year. One filled with a promotion and then an addition two new hires.

Claims work for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) still seems to be our number one resourced benefit we provide assistance with. 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 was expanded again in January of 2025. 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. With that said we have also shifted our thought a bit to provide programs and services that take a whole health and holistic approach to how we serve our Vetrans.

Outreach Events Conducted In 2024:

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 four accredited representatives, which have increased the training budget due to the requirements to maintain these accreditations. These accreditations are with seven different 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 veteran's 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 make 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 73% of our appropriate budget last year and returned more than $300,000.00 back to the general fund. Our 2025 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