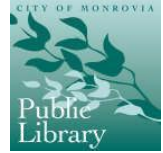




**CITY OF MONROVIA
LIBRARY BOARD
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services
Library Division

MEETING DATE: August 24, 2023

PREPARED BY: Mabel Cross,
Adult Services Librarian

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-1

TITLE: 2022-2023 Veterans Resource Center Update

OBJECTIVE: To update the Library Board on the status of the Veterans Resource Center

BACKGROUND: *Veterans Connect @ the Library* was a federally funded program from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by the California State Library. Starting in November, 2016, the Monrovia Public Library became one of approximately 63 libraries in California with a dedicated Veterans Resource Center supported by this program. When state funding ended in 2022, the City stepped in to fully fund the Veterans Resource Center to ensure the continued access to services for the community's veterans. The Veterans Resource Center helps service members and their families learn about state and federal education, employment, housing, health, disability, and other benefits that may be available through their military service. Providing information to reintegrate veterans into the local workforce and communities in order to provide them the quality of life of other Americans, is a special focus. The goals for this project are to:

1. Provide veteran benefits and local service information to veterans and their family members, and links to other organizations serving veterans, especially local County Veteran Services Offices, CalVet, and the Federal Veterans Affairs Office (VA).
2. Increase registered veterans in the CalVet Reintegration System.
3. Increase California veteran benefit claims.
4. Connect veterans and their families to library resources.
5. Connect with community partners who play a critical role in connecting veterans and their families with services and support within Los Angeles County

In order to meet these goals, the Veterans Resource Center is supported by a library staff member, a County of Los Angeles Military Veterans Services Officer (CVSO), a representative from the Veterans Peer Access Network (VPAN), and three CalVet-trained volunteers who provide assistance to veterans, links to local resources, and assist with programming and outreach events. Additional programming and materials are generously supported by the Friends of the Monrovia Public Library.

ANALYSIS: Currently in its 7th year of operation, the Veterans Resource Center continues to broaden outreach efforts and strengthen support to local service members and their families by partnering with veterans' service providers, organizations, agencies, elected officials and local groups serving veterans. Now that the Covid-19 pandemic has passed staff have resumed services to veterans in full force, with in-person programs and events. In FY 22/23, staff, on-site representatives, and volunteers interacted with a total of 1,078 veterans and their families at the library as well as 339 interactions at outreach events and programs.

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Veterans Resource Center Statistics for FY 2022/2023 (July 2022-June 2023):

CVSO Appointments.	171
Staff/Vol Interactions (emails, in-person, via phone)	604
VPAN Appointments.	303
Outreach Events	6
Outreach Interactions	93
Programs	3
Program Attendees	246
VetNow Online Sessions	308
Volunteer Hours	33

This year, the CVSO, Hayden Velasquez, increased the number of days from two to three that he is on-site at the Veterans Resource Center. He provides in-person and phone assistance to veterans and their families by preparing and submitting claims and in representing claimants before federal, state and local agencies. He is available at the Veterans Resource Center on Mondays & Wednesdays from 10 am–5 pm & Thursdays from 12 pm-5 pm. The on-site CVSO had a total of 171 interactions with veterans and their families in fiscal year 22/23.

In July 2021, staff began a new partnership with the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN), which connects County departments, non-profits, the VA and local programs to meet veterans and their families' needs. VPAN is the first-ever community-driven support network serving veterans and their families in the U.S. VPAN connects non-profits and the VA to help veterans navigate complicated systems so that they can receive the services they deserve. As part of the Los Angeles County Mental Health Department, VPAN is led by veterans for veterans, and provides mental health; substance misuse support; housing; workforce development and employment; legal services; and food, transportation and childcare assistance. In addition, they provide veterans with opportunities to connect with other veterans in social and recreational settings. Brock Milhorn, the VPAN representative, is on-site at the Veterans Resource Center on Tuesdays from 10 am–5 pm. The VPAN representative had a total of 303 interactions with veterans and their families in fiscal year 22/23.

Staff also promotes VetNow, an online platform which provides veterans access to live veteran benefit navigators, live job coaching, a resume lab, job tools, and college skills resources. In fiscal year 22/23, VetNow was accessed 308 times. In addition, staff promotes the new library databases provided by the California State Library for lifelong learning and workforce development.

The library regularly partners with the local chapters of the American Legion Women's Auxiliary, American Legion Post 280, and the VFW Post 2070. Staff also continued partnerships with Assemblymember Chris Holden, Senator Anthony Portantino, Congresswoman Judy Chu, and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano in providing veterans resources in the San Gabriel Valley.

Outreach & Programming

Veterans Peer Access Network Panel at Monrovia Library, August 20, 2022:

- The VPAN representative hosted a panel at the library with an overview of the services and resources VPAN provides veterans and their families, including its work with the VA and state agencies.

Veterans Day Ceremony in Library Park, November 11, 2022:

- The City of Monrovia created a “Field of Honor” by placing several American flags in Library Park. City staff handed out tags for those wishing to thank a veteran. Well-wishers were encouraged to write a message of appreciation and then tie it to a flag pole. The Veterans Day ceremony was hosted by the Allied Veterans Council. Library staff were in attendance to inform veterans and their family of their earned military benefits.

Thankful & Grateful Event in Library Park, November 17, 2022:

- The Veterans Resource Center had a booth at the city event with library staff and the CVS0 to support the community’s veterans and promote the center.

Veteran and Family Appreciation Day at Pasadena City College, December 6 2022:

- The event was hosted by JVS SoCAL, Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN) & Pasadena City College’s Veterans Resource Center as a resource fair for military veterans, active duty service members, students, guard, reserves and their family members. Library staff hosted a booth and shared information about the local resources available to veterans and their families.

Annual Charitable Giving Campaign with the American Legion Women’s Auxiliary Unit #830 in February 2023:

- A donation of 240 socks was received by the library and shared with the group for their annual giving campaign for military service members

VA-HUD Veterans Event in El Monte, March 28, 2023:

- Library staff attended this local veterans event to build partnerships with other organizations in the San Gabriel Valley that serve veterans, many of whom participated in the Community Picnic in June 2023.

Veteran and Family Wellness Event in Pasadena, April 29 2023:

- A collaboration between the American Legion Post 280 and VPAN Supervisory District 5 for veterans and their families. Library staff hosted a booth and promoted upcoming events for veterans, including the Thank You Dinner and Community Picnic.

Veterans Thank You Dinner at Monrovia Library, May 3, 2023:

- Honoring veterans, service members and their families with a meal from Jake’s BBQ and a Q&A with the CVS0 and VPAN representative after dinner.

Community Picnic Celebrating Veterans in Library Park, June 24 2023:

- The library hosted a community picnic and resource fair for veterans and their families with food, games, music, and activities for all ages. The resource fair included information booths from over 20 community partners, including the local VFW, VPAN, City Departments, Amazon, the VA, the L.A. County Military and Veterans Affairs Office, CalVet, American Legion, JVS SoCal, and many more. The Chinatown Health Center provided free COVID tests and vaccines to attendees.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Library Board move to receive and file AR-1 2022-2023 Veterans Resource Center Update.

LIBRARY BOARD ACTION REQUIRED: If the Library Board concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion: *Receive and file report AR-1 2022-2023 Veterans Resource Center Update*

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