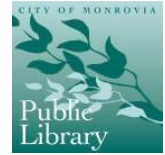




**CITY OF MONROVIA
LIBRARY BOARD
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services
Library Division

MEETING DATE: August 22, 2024

PREPARED BY: Kurt Gally,
Adult Services Supervisor

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-1

TITLE: 2023-2024 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 (VRC) 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 (VRC) 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 8th year of operation, the Veterans Resource Center continues to broaden outreach efforts and strengthen support to local service members and their families by collaborating 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. That number increased by 50% in FY 23/24, with a

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total of 1,620 interactions. This increase is due in part to the addition of more programs and outreach events for veterans within the community. Regular, monthly programs and outreach such as the Veterans Meetup at Starbucks and staff attendance at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) member meetings have helped raise awareness of the program to the broader community. Even more programming and outreach events are planned for FY 24/25.

Veterans Resource Center Statistics for FY 2023/2024 (July 2023-June 2024):

CVSO Appointments.	347
Staff/Vol Interactions (emails, in-person, via phone)	1,021
VPAN Appointments.	252
Outreach Events	10
Outreach Interactions	847
Programs	16
Program Attendees	470
VetNow Online Sessions	245
Volunteer Hours	52

The County of Los Angeles Military Veterans Services Officer (CVSO), Hayden Velasquez, is on-site at the Veterans Resource Center 3 days a week. 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 Wednesdays from 10 am – 5 pm, Thursdays from 12 pm - 5 pm, and Fridays from 12 pm - 5 pm. The on-site CVSO had a total of 347 interactions with veterans and their families in FY 23/24, a 103% increase from the previous fiscal year (171 interactions in FY 22/23).

Now in its 3rd year, the partnership with the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN), which connects County departments, non-profits, the Veterans Affairs (VA) and local programs to meet veterans and their families’ needs provides yet another in-person support system offered by the VRC. 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 252 interactions with veterans and their families in FY 23/24.

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 FY 23/24, VetNow was accessed 245 times.

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

- VFW Chamber of Commerce Mixer Outreach, July 2023
- Annual Veterans Forum with Congresswomen Napolitano & Chu, August 2023
- Veterans Meetup at Starbucks, monthly program launched in September 2023
- Veterans Paint & Sip, October 2023
- Veterans Day Ceremony in Library Park, November 2023
- Thankful & Grateful Event in Library Park, November 2023
- Veterans Resource Forum with LA County Supervisor Barger, November 2023
- Veterans Breakfast & Tour of the Monrovia Historical Museum, January 2024
- Staff Presentation at VFW Member Meeting, monthly outreach launched in February 2024
- Line Dancing Program for Veterans, March 2024
- Staff Presented on Veterans Services for California Library Association Webinar, March 2024
- Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration Outreach in El Monte, April 2024
- Veterans Thank You Dinner at Monrovia Library, May 2024
- Community Picnic Celebrating Veterans in Library Park, June 2024
- Veterans Forum Outreach Event at the Azusa Armory, June 2024

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Library Board move to receive and file AR-1 2023-2024 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 2023-2024 Veterans Resource Center Update***

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