

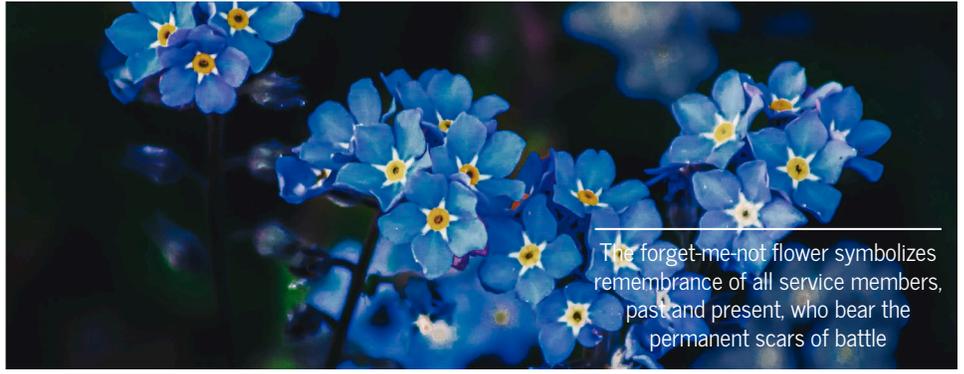
The Veteran Advocate

Spring/Summer 2022

News and information from the nation's oldest community-based nonprofit organization serving veterans



From the Executive Director



The forget-me-not flower symbolizes remembrance of all service members, past and present, who bear the permanent scars of battle

Hello friends!

Spring is such a beautiful time of year in the Finger Lakes Region! We begin to see color again as our flowers bloom, the grass grows, and the sun shines for a little longer each day. All around us there is growth and rebirth. And there is something inexplicably healing about the repetitive cycle of nature.

As in nature, people also have seasons of their lives. The men and women we serve at Veterans Outreach Center are no different. They may be experiencing a more challenging period of life when we first meet them. But they come to Veterans Outreach Center seeking growth, opportunities, and healthier lifestyles. They trust us to support them through this transformation, and that is exactly what we do!

Like nature and like the veterans we serve, Veterans Outreach Center has also undergone many seasons of growth and rebirth throughout our 49 year history. But perhaps few have been as robust as 2022! Just before Valentine's Day, we showed our love to veterans by officially breaking ground on the renovation and expansion of Richards House! This is actually the largest capital improvement project we've ever undertaken. We're calling it "Operation Safe Haven" because this facility is home to nearly 100 veterans experiencing homelessness each year, and home should be a warm, safe place for everyone.

Just a few weeks after our groundbreaking, we hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for our new fitness center! Over the years, veterans have told us that fitness is important to them. They've asked if we could provide a place where they could work out, because research shows that exercise is not only good for your physical health, but it also does a substantial job of combatting anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. After careful planning and fundraising, we were able to bring this dream to life! We're so excited to be able to provide yet another healthy option for veterans to grow.

In addition to that, we have renovated our Quartermaster and moved it to a more accessible location within our building to make it even simpler to get free food, clothing, and hygiene kits to the veterans who need them.

We stand by our commitment to serve those who served U.S. in any way we can. Every year, we reevaluate the services we offer and seek ways to grow and transform so that we can keep pace with the ever-changing needs of our veterans. I hope you enjoy this newsletter, and if you're a veteran, I encourage you to stop by or give us a call to see how we might be able to work together.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Stradley

Laura Stradley
Executive Director
Veterans Outreach Center
U.S. Army Veteran

OPERATION SAFE HAVEN

Richards House Renovation and Expansion



A SAVE HAVEN FOR VETERANS

On a very cold and snowy Friday, February 11, 2022, Veterans Outreach Center Executive Director and U.S. Army Veteran Laura Stradley put on her pink hard hat, grabbed a shovel and officially broke ground for the planned renovation and expansion of Richards House. The facility serves nearly 100 homeless veterans each year and is a critical step toward stabilizing veterans in crisis. The comprehensive renovation plan includes new space for confidential counseling meetings and therapy programs. Upon completion, the project will add 16 beds, which will close the gap between the number of homeless veterans and the number of shelter beds available in our community. The new and improved space will also feature an elevator; given that many of our veterans are older and/or disabled, this is an extremely important addition. Veterans will gain privacy through single or double dormitories with their own bathrooms, as opposed to the current structure of 4 – 6 man bays. Kitchen and laundry facilities will be greatly enhanced, and so much more!

Project plans began to take shape in 2019 and even a global pandemic could not deter the mission. Along with extraordinary increases in the costs of construction materials, labor, gas and inflation, the final cost of the renovation has soared to a little over 7-million dollars. “We are so grateful to our contractors at Pike Construction and to our site managers Campus Construction Management Group who are guiding us through this process and keeping a lid on expenses as best they can,” states Stradley. “We are currently on schedule for our anticipated completion date of Spring 2023. We have learned so much through this process and can’t wait until we are able to provide a safe haven for our homeless vets that will truly be a place to call home.”

THE TIME IS NOW!

For nearly half a century, Veterans Outreach Center has been “Serving Those Who Served U.S.” We are anchored in the Western NY community and deliver life-saving services to thousands of veterans each year. We invite you to be a part of the future of VOC as we grow our commitment to our most vulnerable veterans. We are tremendously grateful for those who have already seen the need and have stepped forward with their financial investment. Now we are calling everyone to join us on our mission of providing the best care possible for all veterans. Through your investment in Operation Safe Haven, we will be sure that no veteran who has served our country is living without their basic needs met. They served us and together, we can serve them. We’ve been working hard with our community partners to raise the funds for this project over the last three years. Your help is needed now to turn our vision into reality. Please visit our web site at vocsafehaven.org and give what you can, multi-year support pledges are available. For more information, contact Joan Brandenburg, Director of Advancement, at 585.295.7821 or Joan.Brandenburg@vocroc.org



THE A PLACE TO HEAL WHOLE VETERAN

Marshall is an Army Veteran with an honorable discharge. He came to Veterans Outreach Center seeking help after getting a DWI. Marshall entered our Veterans Treatment Court program, which provides intensive case management to veterans with a mental health or substance abuse diagnosis to assist them in addressing issues they may be facing. In addition to that, Marshall was welcomed to Richards House, our emergency shelter for homeless veterans, to help him get back on his feet.

As Marshall's life began to stabilize, VOC assisted him with updating his resume and helping him network with several veteran-friendly employers. He also utilized transportation assistance, participated in job readiness training from our Employment & Training team, and received new work clothes from our Quartermaster program.

Today, Marshall has graduated from Veterans Treatment Court, is working full-time, and has found a home of his own. He continues to use the services at our Morale Center to stay connected with other veterans and get some well-deserved self-care.

For confidentiality purposes, the veteran's name was omitted and a stock photo was used.

NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE IN LIFE, VOC HAS SOMETHING FOR **ALL** VETERANS.

Stop by, or contact us, today:

447 South Ave., Rochester, NY 14620 • 585.546.1081 • vocroc.org

VOC WELCOMES MICHAEL HARDY AS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT



Born in Rochester, NY, Michael is a native of The Finger Lakes region. He is the proud son, nephew and grandson of relatives who served in the Armed Forces, including his Grandma Mae who served proudly as a WAC in WWII. As a child, Michael recalls loving to hear her exclaim "I did wear combat boots!"

Over his thirty-five year career, Michael has served as a Convention Sales Manager, as well as the Director of both Convention Services and Visitor Services for Visit Rochester. Most recently, Michael concluded a successful chapter as Executive Director of the 400 member, Watkins Glen Area Chamber of Commerce. In 2019 he went back to complete his Bachelor's Degree from Rochester Institute of Technology finishing on the Deans List. Michael is thrilled to be at the VOC "serving those who have served U.S.!" He is eager to support the services and programs we provide and will focus on growing our agency fundraising events as well as engage others to support our mission with donations of time, talent or treasure. Contact Michael at Michael.Hardy@vocroc.org or call 585.295.7824.

VOC would also like to welcome the following new team members who have joined us in our mission to leave no veteran unserved.

- Hannah Cappon - Accounting Clerk
- Virgil Castner - Case Manager
- Paul Cooper - Security Guard
- Sean Holly - Training Coordinator
- Leah Lawson - Case Manager
- Jonathan Litto - Facilities Support
- Gabriel Marcano Ojeda - Quartermaster
- Jahmeir Robinson - Fitness Center Coordinator
- Grace Tursi - Marketing Comm Coordinator
- Richard Vargas - Security Guard
- Reginald White - Residential Svs Assistant Mgr

WE'RE HIRING!

Ready to start making a difference in the lives of local veterans? Apply for a career at VOC today!
www.vocroc.org/careers

Collaborative Teams • Generous PTO • Free Fitness Center Use • Professional Development Opportunities • & More!

FLAG DAY
JUNE 11TH - 14TH
ALL ACROSS ROCHESTER!

GOLF FORE VETS
JULY 25TH
MIDVALE COUNTRY CLUB

POUND THE GROUND
5K RUN/WALK
AUGUST 24TH
MENDON PONDS PARK

A STARS & STRIPES
CELEBRATION
NOVEMBER 4TH
ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE
CONVENTION CENTER

HOPE FOR HEROES
TELETHON
NOVEMBER 11TH
WROC TV-8 OR
ROCHESTERFIRST.COM

Learn more about VOC's signature events at vocroc.org

MAKING FITNESS A PRIORITY

VOC Hosts Grand Opening of Brand New Fitness Center

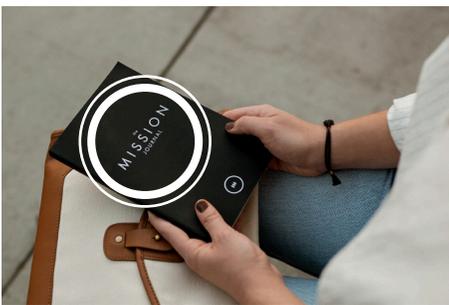
Veterans Outreach Center expanded program offerings yet again for local veterans by opening The Fitness Center at VOC as part of our Health & Wellness Services. The fitness center provides a space where veterans can decompress, get in a good workout, and connect with other veterans. It is designed to be individualized and welcoming to veterans of all fitness levels. "Being able to provide this service to local veterans is very important and exciting for us," Veterans Outreach Center Executive Director and U.S. Army Veteran Laura Stradley said. "Now not only will we be able to support veterans with behavioral health, peer-to-peer support groups, housing, employment services and more, but we'll also have a safe space for veterans to focus on their physical health. And research shows that exercise can have a tremendously positive impact on mental health." Veteran family members over the age of 18 are welcome when accompanied by a veteran.

More information about The Fitness Center at VOC can be found at www.vocroc.org/fitness-center.



BUILD RESILIENCY BY FINDING YOUR PURPOSE

re·sil·ience: the ability to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness



When we are resilient, we are able to adapt to adversity, trauma, or any significant source of stress, such as family problems or financial challenges. Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. With resilience comes personal growth. Resilience is not simply a gift; it is a characteristic all of us can develop, like building muscle. Here are two tips for increasing resilience by finding purpose.

Move toward your goals. Set realistic goals, perhaps small steps toward something you want to accomplish. Do something regularly that's achievable. Ask yourself, "What's one thing I can accomplish today that moves me in the direction I want to go?" For example, if you're struggling with the loss of a loved one and you want to take an initial step forward, consider joining a grief support group.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. Though it may be hard to believe while we're going through difficult times, we can actually benefit from hardship. Look for ways to grow as a result of struggle. For example, people have reported better relationships and a greater sense of strength after or even while experiencing adversity.

Want to learn more about how you can build resiliency? Contact our Behavioral Health Services team today at 585.546.1081.



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24TH
 MENDON PONDS PARK & VIRTUAL
 6:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.
 95 DOUGLAS RD, HONEOYE FALLS, NY 14472

VISIT VOCROC.ORG/PTG FOR EVENT DETAILS
 REGISTER TODAY!



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BECOME A VALUED MEMBER OF THE VOC SUPPORT FORCE!

VOC Support Force is a distinguished unit of donors who help transform the lives of local veterans by committing funds to ensure that Veterans Outreach Center has the support needed to complete our daily missions all year long.

By becoming a Support Force member, you will join a special community of monthly donors who are committed to serving those who served U.S.

For more information, or to enlist in the VOC Support Force, contact Mary Prusak, Development Assistant, at 585.295.7847 or Mary.Prusak@vocroc.org.

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL	MONTHLY
Enlisted member	\$5/month
NCO member	\$10/month
Warrant Officer member	\$25/month
Field Officer member	\$50/month
Flag Officer member	\$100/month



"Jill Biden said, 'Life is change.' I feel this aligns with the VOC mission by reminding us all that change is inevitable and a part of life. Either it is transitioning out of the military, transitioning into the civilian workforce, or transitioning family phases in life, it is all a part of being us and our inner core remains the same. We as a family are proud to have served and continue our support to Veterans in our community." – Jae Min Yandow, U.S. Army Veteran and VOC Support Force Member. His wife serves in the Army Reserves.



VETERANS
OUTREACH CENTER Inc.

★ Serving Those Who Serve U.S. ★[®]

**447 SOUTH AVE.,
ROCHESTER, NY 14620**

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