

Alachua County Advisory Boards

Annual Workplan/Accomplishments Report FY 2018-2019

Date: Aug 12, 2019

Board/Committee Name: Alachua County Veteran Services Advisory Board

Chairman: Nick Klein

Staff Support: Kim Davis, County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) Director and Cherie Korn, Veterans Claims Counselor

Board Liaison: Kim Davis, County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) Director

Brief History of Committee: The Veteran Services Advisory Board is a long-standing board that has advised the BoCC since 1983. It is a forum for local veterans' organizations to discuss and resolve veteran related matters, provide information on events and activities, and coordinate programs and patriotic projects while working together for improved results. It has become a channel for the flow of information, planning and synergy within our veteran's community. The Veteran Services Advisory board (VSAB) has been charged by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) to complete an Annual Review of the Alachua County Veteran Service Office (VSO). In addition, the VSAB Oversight Committee has been established to assist and advise the BoCC on policies in the future direction of the Veteran Service Office.

Annual Review of the Alachua County Veterans, Service Office

Total Veterans/Clients Served: 2,310 Total

Veteran benefits & pensions received: \$2,644,512.07 (January 2018- Dec 2018)

<i>Date of Service</i>	<i>Veterans Served</i>
<i>4th Quarter – Jul 18 – Sep 18</i>	<i>535</i>
<i>1st Quarter – Oct 18 -Dec 18</i>	<i>501</i>
<i>2nd Quarter – Jan 19- Mar 19</i>	<i>686</i>
<i>3rd Quarter – Apr 19- Jun 19</i>	<i>588</i>

Community Veteran Engagement

There are approximately 20,000 veterans in Alachua County, they make up over 7% of the county's total residency. Alachua County is very fortunate to be served by many private community organizations, as well as many non-profit organizations that serve the Alachua County veteran community.

In addition to these groups, Alachua County has a large & unique population of student veterans enrolled at the University of Florida, Santa Fe College, Saint Leo University

and other institutions of higher learning. The majority of student veterans are receiving educational benefits and living expenses from the Veterans Administration as a result of their military service. Both Santa Fe College and UF have student organizations geared specifically for student veterans and provide support and advice on receiving benefits and navigating their educational programs. In FY 2018-2019, Santa Fe student veterans and family members (423 students enrolled in Fall '18) received \$4.7 million in living stipends. The University of Florida has approximately 850 veteran students and family members receiving living stipends.

Below are some of the resources that have been provided to Alachua County Veterans in 2018 from just a few of the Alachua County private organizations and programs:

Gainesville Korean War Veterans of America: Increased Funding of Dick Davis and Dane Dewey MOH Bridge Scholarships from \$15,000 to \$20,000, this scholarship provides two veteran students, annually, with a one-time, \$1,000 dollar scholarship when they enter Santa Fe College or UF. Regularly provides Color Guard and Honor Guard services for Alachua County events and veteran burials.

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1092: Fully funded a 2nd Bridge Scholarship, now providing to two veteran students, annually, with a one-time, \$1,000 dollar scholarship when they enter Santa Fe College or UF. VVA is very active in the Alachua County Veterans Treatment Court and provides 7 mentors to help run the program. Regularly provides Color Guard and Honor Guard services for Alachua County events and veteran burials.

American Legion Post 16: Has over 450 active veteran members in Alachua County. Provides 2 Veteran advocates that have processed 27 applications for Alachua County veterans to receive benefits or services. Has funded multiple Bridge Scholarships to student veterans. Donated and distributed resources for over 50 homeless veterans. In 2018, donated over \$6,000 to individual Alachua County veterans in need. Provides a meeting place for many veterans' organizations as well as individual veterans and their families.

Disabled American Veterans Charity (DAV) – Gainesville: Operates 11 DAV vans that transport veterans to and from the Malcolm Randall VA hospital and their residences, mainly in Alachua County and surrounding areas. The vans are driven by volunteers who have logged 221,717 miles and transported 6,461 in 2018. Donated \$35, 339 to the Malcolm Randall VA hospital.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program: a grant funded program provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs, and has been in Alachua County since October 2013. From August 1, 2018 to July 31, 2019, Volunteers of America assisted a total of 85 veterans (28 at risk & 57 literally homeless) Veteran families with services. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare assisted a total of 223 (73 at risk & 150 literally homeless) Veteran families.

VETSPACE: VETSPACE continuously supports veterans who need transitional housing. They provide 14 beds for its veteran participant and has a 79% bed utilization rate.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH): MOPH continues to support ROTC and JROTC Activities in Alachua County and annually hold fundraisers for ROTC/JROTC scholarships. MOPH raised \$500 to help fund the “travelling” Vietnam War Memorial.

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA): MOAA members continue to support ROTC/JROTC scholarships and activities, as well as participate annually in Veterans’ Day ceremonies and other patriotic events. Members also volunteer for mobile kitchens, hurricane relief and had the largest contribution of funds for the Vietnam Memorial by individual members.

Goals and Objectives for the Alachua County Veterans Services Advisory Board FY 2019-2020

1. Continue to monitor the Alachua County Veterans Services Office in support of local veterans and to work with VSAB to provide the best services to the veterans of Alachua County. Provide input concerning veteran related issues to the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC).
2. To support and encourage local veteran organizations in planning events designed to improve the quality of life of Alachua County veterans.
3. Support Patriotic holidays and foster public awareness of veterans’ service and patriotism.
4. Support the annual Alachua County Veterans Resource Fair and Stand Down.
5. Support and advocate for veteran and patriotic memorials in Alachua County.
6. Study and advise the BoCC on improving veteran transportation issues.
7. Study and advocate for safer and more affordable housing for Alachua County veterans.
8. Assign more active committees to study veteran issues, including the improvement of veteran community outreach.
9. Update memorial information for the “Veterans Memorials in Alachua County” publication, including digital updates.

Recommendations to the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners

1. Continue to invest in the Alachua County Veterans Services Office, including steps to ensure staff longevity.
2. Increase focus on providing mental health services, affordable housing and employment opportunities for veterans of Alachua County.

3. Support local veterans organizations and non-profits that help serve the Alachua County veteran community.