

MARCH 2023

The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.



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Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



Every March, St. Patrick's Day invites us to borrow some luck from the Irish.

But this month is also an opportunity to remember a lesser-known act of fortune involving Congress, the United States Navy, a group of altruistic Americans, and the Irish people.

In 1845, a devastating famine began in Ireland when the country's potato crop—and primary source of food—was infested with bacteria. The result was dire hunger, widespread malnutrition, and ultimately, death for one million Irish citizens.

Two years into the “Great Hunger,” a concerned group of Bostonians decided they needed to do something to help. Captain Robert Bennet Forbes, a civilian merchant, asked a bold favor of Congress: Could he use a U.S. Navy warship to deliver supplies to the Irish people?

On March 28, 1847, the *USS Jamestown* left Boston, loaded with tons of food donated by Americans.

“Direct aid from the United States to Ireland became a first-ever national deluge of generosity that shocked the world, and in many ways, changed it,” [argues historian and author Stephen Puleo](#) in the Boston Globe.

[Read Monica's full message.](#)

Around HPO



[VA Outlines 2023 Goals Toward Ending Veteran Homelessness](#)

VA has established its 2023 goals to build upon efforts to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans, including once again placing no less than

38,000 more Veterans experiencing homelessness into permanent housing nationwide during the calendar year. [Read the full press release.](#)

[Social Work Breaks Barriers in the Fight to End Veteran Homelessness](#)



Each March during Social Work Month, we celebrate the outstanding social workers in our programs who play an essential role in ending Veteran homelessness and reflect on the positive contributions achieved by social workers nationwide. [Read the spotlights](#) of featured VA social workers.



[2022 Homeless Programs Office \(HPO\) Annual Report](#)

This annual report highlights each HPO program’s accomplishments in providing case management and other services to prevent Veteran homelessness or ensure that it is rare, brief, and nonrecurring. [Read the annual report.](#)

[Ending Veteran Homelessness Podcast: Putting Out Burnout – Supporting Those Who Support America’s Veterans](#)

On the Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast, learn about how burnout can impact the care that VA provides to Veterans experiencing homelessness and housing



instability, and what VA is doing about it. [Listen to the episode.](#)



[National Vietnam War Veterans Day](#)

On March 29, 1973, the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. It was also the day Hanoi released the last of its acknowledged prisoners of war. Each year, VA is privileged to honor Vietnam Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice. Our nation pledges our enduring respect, our continuing care, and our everlasting commitment to [all Vietnam Veterans.](#)

[Advancing Primary Prevention in Human Services: Convening Findings](#)

Last August, the *HHS Convening on Advancing Primary Prevention in Human Services* discussed the prevention of youth and family homelessness, featuring the perspectives of academic experts, program administrators, federal colleagues, and people with lived experience. A research brief has been created to highlight key findings from the convening, spur ongoing conversation, and inform next steps. [Read the full brief.](#)



[Army Veteran Finds Hearts of Gold with Dublin VA Team](#)

Years after separating from the Army, Veteran Frank Dawson found himself struggling with alcohol use, without a place to call home. Through VA, he received the substance use treatment, housing, and career planning he needed to get back on his feet. [Read the full story.](#)

[Veterans Affairs Life Insurance \(VALife\)](#)

VALife provides low-cost coverage to Veterans with service-connected disabilities, and there is no deadline to apply if you are age 80 or under. [Find out if you're eligible](#) and learn how to apply.



Health Update



CDC continues to recommend that everyone stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines for their age group, which varies for [children and teens aged 6 months–17 years](#) and [adults aged 18 years and older](#). It is also advised that you continue to get your COVID-

19 vaccine even after recovering from COVID-19 infection, as it still provides added protection.

In addition, CDC recommends [1 updated booster dose](#) for [everyone aged 5 years and older](#) who completed their primary series, and children [aged 6 months through 4 years](#) who completed the Moderna primary series.

For more information on staying up to date with the COVID-19 vaccine, [visit the CDC website](#). [Click here](#) to learn about getting your vaccine or booster through VA.

HPO Staff Spotlight: Teresa Pittman, LCSW

As the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Regional Coordinator, Teresa Pittman supports the Network Homeless Coordinators in the field, disseminating guidance, helping with problem solving, evaluating clinical complexities, and doing whatever she can to help them be successful with implementing the program.



But throughout her 25-year career, she also played a key role in getting Tribal HUD-VASH off the ground, helping support Native American Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

[Read Pittman's full spotlight](#) to learn about her proudest memories working with VA, the project she hopes will continue on after her retirement, and her advice for VA's homeless programs as we continue working to end Veteran homelessness.

HPO Fact of the Month



Did you know VA has a program that specifically helps [homeless Native American Veterans exit homelessness](#)?

The Tribal Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program combines rental assistance from HUD with case management, clinical and supportive services provided by VA specifically for Native American Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

[Watch our video](#) describing the program and how it helps Native American Veterans in need.