

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT

2015

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State of Maryland

Larry Hogan

Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford

Lieutenant Governor

Department of Veterans Affairs

George Owings

Secretary

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A Message from Secretary George Owings

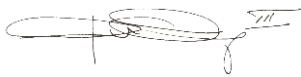
I am honored to present the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs 2015 Annual Report. Throughout 2015 the Department maintained its commitment to serving our veterans and families. This report provides the opportunity to share successes and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for our Maryland Veterans and their families.

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs manages five key programs which share one key mission, to serve our veterans and families by ensuring they have access to the benefits and services to which they are entitled as a result of military service. Our mission is accomplished in a number of ways as evidenced in this report.

Approximately 9.6% of Maryland's adult population are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, according to the Housing Assistance Council. With the continued drawdown of troops, more military personnel are returning to civilian life. Our Post 9-11 veterans, making up 16% of Maryland's veteran population, will look towards accessing benefits, health care, education, and employment. They will need assistance in adapting to civilian culture and navigating through the myriad of resources available to them. Maryland's older veteran generation, those who served during World War II, Korea, and the Vietnam Era, comprises approximately 50% of the population. They will need increased access to health care and assisted living services.

Regardless of service era, we diligently work to ensure all Maryland veterans have access to the resources and services to which they are entitled. In the coming year, we look forward to expanding our partnerships with other Federal, State, and Local Governments, as well as with community organizations, to make accessing services for our Maryland Veterans and families as seamless as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Owings, III", with a stylized flourish at the end.

George W. Owings, III
Secretary

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Executive Summary

In accordance with §9-946 and §9-928c of the State Government Article, the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs submits its 2015 Annual Report.

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (Veterans Affairs) is a State Government Executive Department with a service mission to provide representation to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs via the Service and Benefits Program, to manage and operate authorized Maryland State Veteran Cemeteries and to care for memorials for the Maryland World War II, Vietnam, and Korean War Veterans and a Civil War Cemetery. The Department manages the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund and an Outreach and Advocacy Program.

According to the most recent U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs data projections, there were an estimated 437,762 veterans living in Maryland. To help address the challenges facing Maryland Veterans as they retire or return home from military service the Department continues to provide safety nets, wherever possible, to enhance services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Defense. The Department continues to collaborate with other agencies to advocate on behalf of veterans and their families and diligently works to ensure that providers are informed on veteran needs and that those veterans and their families have access to benefits they have earned.

In Fiscal Year 2015, *The Service Program* submitted 5,287 disability compensation and pension claims for adjudication to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of veterans, dependents and survivors. Maryland Veterans received over 26 million dollars in new/increased and one-time monthly cash benefits with support from this program. *Charlotte Hall Veterans Home* continues to provide quality assisted living and skilled nursing services to our aging and disabled veterans, along with eligible spouses. The most recent 2015 year to date census reached 90% capacity in skilled nursing and 82% capacity in assisted living. Since 2010, the *Maryland Veterans Trust Fund* has distributed over \$129,000 in grants and loans to Maryland veterans and eligible dependents.

The Cemetery Program is a leader among the nation in state veterans cemetery programs. Over the past three years, the Cemetery Program provided an average of 3,385 interments. To ensure that Maryland Veterans and their families are aware of benefits and services, the *MDVA Outreach and Advocacy Program* attended over 130 events and meetings, speaking to over 4,000 providers, veterans and family members. The program increased its email distribution list to over 33,000 contacts.

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Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Programs

SERVICE PROGRAM

“I felt like we really were a team with MY best interests in mind...I strongly encourage all veterans to take advantage of the benefits they’ve earned and the hospitality of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs.” –Navy SEAL Veteran, Vietnam

The Service Program provides assistance to the men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces, their dependents and survivors, and the general public, in obtaining benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, the State of Maryland, and other programs for veterans and their families. Benefits Specialists are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and are able to provide representation and advocacy in a respectful manner. Benefits Specialists can also assist the veteran community in reviewing previous U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs rating decisions.

| Services Offered: | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|---|
| comprehensive benefit Counseling | claim development, preparation, submission | case management | appeal initiation when appropriate |
| Federal, State and Local Agency networking | public speaking | outreach event attendance | information and referral services |
| Information and Referral Services: (to include but not limited to) | | | |
| crisis intervention | public assistance | homeless services | social security |

At each of its 10 remote service centers, Benefits Specialists are able to enhance services by having direct access to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs claims tracking systems. Access to these systems allows each service center to obtain claim status and updated information for clientele served.

Clientele include veterans who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, who may present with geriatric, Alzheimer’s and dementia issues, as well as the effects of Agent Orange exposure and post-traumatic stress. Additionally, veterans of recent conflicts may present with the impact of traumatic brain injury as well as post-traumatic stress or toxic exposures. The nature of an individual contact varies greatly depending upon the needs of the individual veteran, dependent or family member.

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Individual contacts may include one on one detailed interviews, involving the review of military separation or discharge documents for the purpose of determining eligibility for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs programs, as well as claim development, or providing general information to family or friends of a veteran.

Examples of individual contacts and length of interview time:

| | |
|---|------------------|
| General information request for a friend or family member | 5 to 10 minutes |
| Providing a claim status update | 10 to 15 minutes |
| Responding to a complex and detailed development letter | 15 to 30 minutes |
| Claim development, preparation, and submission interviews | 45 to 60 minutes |

In Fiscal Year 2015, the Service Program made over 88,000 contacts with veterans, dependents and survivors.

The Service Program submitted 5,287 disability compensation and pension claims for adjudication to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of veterans, dependents and survivors.

Impact:

In Fiscal Year 2015, Maryland Veterans received over 26.4 million dollars in new/increased and monthly cash benefits with support from the Service Program. Economic studies indicate these monies turn over between three and seven times in a community. Using the conservative multiplier of three, this equates to a spending impact of at least 79 million dollars from the monetary benefits received by Maryland Veterans assisted by the Service Program.

It should also be noted that there is no direct correlation between claims filed and benefits received in any one particular year. Many claims filed in Fiscal Year 2015 will not be adjudicated until 2016 or 2017.

Additional Benefits and Services:

Education: Maryland Veterans received \$3,283,680 in education benefits from various U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs education programs in 2015.

Power of Attorney: The MDVA Service Program accepted representation for 2,284 veterans in 2015.

DD214 Repository: Since October 15, 1979, the MDVA Service Program has served as a repository of DD214s for Maryland Veterans released from active duty. In Fiscal Year

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2015, 6,107 DD214s were received and processed. In coordination with the Outreach and Advocacy Program, addresses on DD214s are used to send mailings ('Welcome Home' Packets) to recent honorably discharged veterans.

| Service Program Office Locations | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Baltimore | Hagerstown | Easton | Charlotte Hall |
| Frederick | Cumberland | Salisbury | Rockville |
| Camp Springs | Bel Air | | |

CHARLOTTE HALL VETERANS HOME

"The facility was clean, the staff was happy and helpful, and Dad was in generally good spirits and appeared to be in good shape. Please keep up the good work and thank you for caring for Dad in a respectful and meaningful way." – Daughter of a Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Veteran resident

"I shall be forever indebted to the staff of Charlotte Hall Veterans Home for their tender, loving care of my husband during his sojourn there. ...they knew how to bring out the best in him." – Spouse of a Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Veteran resident

Located in St. Mary's County, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (Charlotte Hall) is a 454 bed facility which provides assisted-living and skilled nursing care for Maryland Veterans and eligible spouses who are unable to take care of themselves due to age or disability.

The 'percent capacity filled' is reported below.

| Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Census Data | | |
|--|------------|--------------|
| 1 st Quarter | Census 410 | 90% capacity |
| 2 nd Quarter | Census 416 | 92% capacity |
| 3 rd Quarter | Census 397 | 87% capacity |
| 4 th Quarter | Census 396 | 87% capacity |

The current 2015 Year to Date Census includes:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Skilled Nursing | 284 available beds | 256 current census | 90% capacity |
| Assisted Living | 170 available beds | 140 current census | 82% capacity |

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Volunteer Services:

The strong support from volunteers continues at Charlotte Hall. This year Charlotte Hall reached nearly *14,000 donated hours which represents having an additional 6.3 people on staff full time.*

2015 Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Highlights

- **In-House Pharmacy**

In May, operations of the in-house pharmacy were fully implemented. The pharmacy is equipped with shelving, counter space, phones, computers, fax machine, security cameras and upgraded door entry locks. Also included in the pharmacy is a state-of-the-art tablet packager that withdraws from bulk containers to create single dose blister packs that are loaded into medicine dispensary carts for each nursing care unit. This medicine dispensing system provides an improved level of control and oversight for the accurate dispensing of medicines and reduces waste by satisfying single medicine dosages from bulk quantities.

- **Donations**

Charlotte Hall continues to benefit from many generous donations to support and enhance the veterans' enjoyment and quality of care. Of the many supporters, several groups stand out for their significant efforts this year. American Legion and Sons of the American Legion, Post #91 in Cambridge provided a new seven-passenger van valued at over \$21,000 to Charlotte Hall. This van will be used to transport residents for appointments and care and to support the business efforts of Charlotte Hall. Post #91 donated an additional \$10,000 towards the purchase of memory care digital calendars and new medical equipment.

American Legion Post #82 in La Plata donated over \$13,000 to purchase a new global communication system and a bariatric bed. The new system will help streamline many tasks in our Activities Department and will ensure effective communication among staff, residents, families and volunteers.

Many groups throughout the community have contributed to the renovation and upgrade of our Rehabilitation Department. Cruisin' Southern Maryland Car Club, American Legion Post #91, DAV Chapter 36, the Service Liaison Committee, Daughters of the American Revolution John Hanson Chapter and Crossroads Church have provided new medical equipment such as parallel bars, pulleys, and a fall protection harness system to replace original, antiquated equipment in Charlotte Hall.

- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Annual Survey**

The annual survey was conducted October 20 through October 23, 2015. The four day survey covered all aspects of resident care and facility compliance to

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life/safety requirements. There were no findings associated with resident care and only one finding that required corrective action to provide an improvement to emergency egress.

- **New State Veterans Home Initiative**

Efforts are underway to provide a second State Veterans Home. The new home is planned to be located in Baltimore County to better support the areas of greatest veteran population. The request has been accepted by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and is currently included in the State Home Construction Grants Priority List. In addition, working with the Maryland Department of General Services, a site feasibility study has been initiated to assess the selected property and verify that infrastructure and services are available to best support home operations.

- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs continues to assess property offered by Charlotte Hall to support placement of a new clinic. The offered property has the desired road frontage for improved visibility and easy access. Most recently the property has been surveyed and assessed for environmental impacts and concerns. Should this property not meet the requirements, it is understood that other property in the Charlotte Hall area is being researched.

- **Broadband Deployment for Southern Maryland**

Charlotte Hall is providing space on the 250-foot tall water tower to St. Mary's County Department of Emergency Services and Technology in support of the initiative to improve and upgrade emergency radio communication broadcasts. The project installation is underway with the placement of the equipment house, emergency generator and propane fuel tank foundation. Details for placement and installation of the necessary tower attachments have been accepted and the County now has those materials and equipment ordered.

- **Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade**

The facility waste water treatment plant, under the guidance of Maryland Environmental Services, is undergoing a complete renovation and upgrade. Work scope includes installation of a membrane bioreactor system, reduction in size of the storage lagoon, replacement of spray field piping, separate electrical power feed and separate emergency generator. The new system is designed to produce a higher quality of effluent with virtually no bacteria, nitrogen or solids.

- **National Association of State Veterans Home Conference**

On May 6 and 7, 2015, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home hosted the National Association of State Veterans Homes Northeast Regional Conference. In attendance were representatives from Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont State Veterans Homes. The conference included presentations from

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several guest speakers, a tour of Charlotte Hall, the grounds, White House and Chapel. On May 7th, guests toured the U.S. Naval Academy and Maryland State House.

- **Charles County Art Alliance**

Charlotte Hall has partnered with the Charles County Art Alliance to have local artists' art work on display to be enjoyed by residents, staff and visitors. The gallery opened on October 22, 2015, and a 'Meet the Artist' reception for that artwork is scheduled for January 23, 2016. The art will be displayed for a four-month period and then replaced with different pieces, providing Charlotte Hall with fresh art on a regular basis. Maryland's First Lady, Mrs. Hogan, visited Charlotte Hall in November, met a number of the artists and was available for pictures with the artists and their work.

- **Charlotte Hall Veterans Day Ceremonies**



This was the sixth year the residents participated in the Veterans Day Parade in Leonardtown, MD. Following the parade, those residents and supporting staff were invited to dine at Mission Barbecue in California, MD where the residents were acknowledged as honored guests. For those residents remaining at Charlotte Hall, a separate ceremony was provided with speakers, entertainment and a special meal. Maryland Delegate Anthony O'Donnell

served as guest speaker. Also, following his participation at the Leonardtown Parade and Remembrance ceremony, Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford visited and toured the Home, greeting many residents and staff. Several residents were also invited to attend Lettie Dent Elementary School's annual ceremony.

- **Meet and Greet**

Twice in 2015, Secretary Owings invited several members of the Governor's staff, Cabinet Secretaries, Delegates and local officials to visit Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. They served as great networking opportunities and proved to be a success. For the second meet & greet on November 17, 2015, Maryland's First Lady, Mrs. Hogan, toured the facility and met with many residents and staff. Mrs. Hogan, an adjunct professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art, also viewed art work now on display and had her picture taken with many of the artists who were in attendance.

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CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL PROGRAM

“The sincerity, emotion and ‘home town’ feeling make this a special service for me. It is filled with the emotions of gratitude and appreciation to our veterans and servicemen.” –Spouse of a veteran, regarding the Veterans Day Program at the Crownsville Veterans Cemetery

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Cemetery Program maintains five (5) State veterans' cemeteries, providing a final resting place for eligible Maryland veterans and their eligible dependents. The five State Veterans Cemeteries include Crownsville in Anne Arundel County, Cheltenham in Prince George's County, Eastern Shore in Dorchester County, Garrison Forest in Baltimore County and Rocky Gap in Allegany County. The Cemetery Program also oversees a Civil War Cemetery at Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown.

Since the program's inception in the mid-1970s, more than 94,000 of Maryland's veterans and their dependents have been interred at our five veterans' cemeteries. This requires the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs not only to conduct burial services, but also provide perpetual care on the ever-increasing expansion of grave sites within the system in accordance with National Cemetery Standards. *The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs is a leader among the nation in State veteran's cemeteries with three out of the five cemeteries among the top ten busiest cemeteries in Fiscal Year 2015.* The State Cemetery program in the past eight years has conducted the highest number of interments of state veteran's cemetery programs throughout the nation.

The facilities provide interment services during the normal business week (Monday through Friday) and are open to the public 365 days a year. The Cemetery Program maintains and operates the cemeteries, sets the eligibility requirements for burial and manages the day-to-day operations and records. There was an average of 3,385 interments annually over the past three years. The annual interment rate represents 30% of Maryland veteran's deaths.

Interment is the most important function carried out in the cemetery where the honor and dignity of our veterans and their families is ensured. The operations and maintenance personnel provide perpetual care to ensure that our State Veterans Cemeteries are maintained as national shrines, dedicated to preserving the history of our

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nation and state, nurturing patriotism and honoring the service and sacrifice veterans and their families have made.

Collectively, for the past three years, the Cemetery Program provided an average of 3,385 interments. Over the last eight years, the Cemetery Program conducted the highest number of interments of any state veteran's cemetery program in the nation. (Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration)

2015 Cemetery Program Highlights

- For Fiscal Year 2016 two new expansion projects were submitted and approved to the State Capital Improvements Program totaling more than 20 million dollars for Garrison Forest and Cheltenham Cemeteries
- The State Cemetery Grants Program approved an Operations & Maintenance Grant for \$1,712,444.00 at Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery which was completed this year
- To be completed in Fiscal Year 2017, The Eastern Shore and Rocky Gap Veteran Cemeteries have started the design phase. The combined estimated cost for construction is over 5 million dollars in 100% refunded grant money from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs State Cemetery Grant Program
- The Crownsville Master Plan and Expansion Phase III project was approved for \$8,097,306.00 by the State Cemetery Grants Program. Construction at the facility has started and by the end of 2016 is expected to be complete
- Memorial Day and Veterans Day events were conducted at all five Maryland State Veterans Cemeteries honoring the service and sacrifices of our State's veterans
- Wreaths Across America events were conducted at all five Maryland State Veterans Cemeteries and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial honoring the service and sacrifice of our State's veterans

Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery

- Placed new signage defining operations and hours on grounds
- Enhanced flower beds outside of shelter, front gates, and administration building
- Installed new living hedge in two Jewish sections
- Installed new shelter carpeting
- Hired an Assistant Superintendent
- Resurfaced portions of roadways
- Repaired spillway leading to silt water management pond

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Crownsville Veterans Cemetery

- Placed new signage defining operations and hours on grounds
- Hired 3 new employees
- Raised and realigned 600 headstones
- Purchased portable water unit for cemetery irrigation
- Established new protocols to meet National Shrine Standards

Eastern Shore Veterans Cemetery

- Finished changing out all lighting to new LED lighting in Cemetery
- Re-set and realigned over 250 headstones
- For his work with the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, Cemetery Superintendent received their Presidential award

Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery

- Installed new awning extending the edges to increase protection outside committal shelter
- Repaired concrete areas for plaza ceremonies
- Installed new blinds in shelter
- Purchased new branch of service flags and bases for ceremonies in the committal shelter
- Installed Comcast internet cable for kiosk gravesite locator access to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs data
- Installed new portable air compressor and water pump to help with interment ceremonies

Rocky Gap Veterans Cemetery

- Placed topsoil and leveled approximately 150 gravesites
- Re-set and realigned over 450 headstones
- Pruned limbs and shrubbery improving overall appearance and minimizing potential damage to State structures in order to help meet National Standards
- Improved origination of shop areas by installing peg boards for equipment, shelving for floral arrangements, and mud board storage units
- Painted building windows, planter boxes, bridges, and other surfaces as needed
- Using a licensed wildlife trapper, eradicated muskrats who were causing shoreline pond damage

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MEMORIALS AND MONUMENTS

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Cemetery and Memorial Program has responsibility for the following memorials:

- World War II Memorial in Annapolis
- Korean War Memorial in Baltimore
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Baltimore
- War Memorial Building in Baltimore - Joint responsibility with the City of Baltimore

In recognition of those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice to secure our freedom and democracy, the memorials are open 365 days a year.

2015 Memorial Highlights

- Held nine patriotic events at the memorials, including Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Wreaths Across America and other special commemorations
- Removed 5 trees and multiple bushes to stop insect damage to memorial wall at the Maryland Korean War Memorial
- Completed aeration, seeding, and insecticide prevention to all three memorials
- Completed a major shrub pruning project at the World War II Memorial with the assistance of the Anne Arundel County Volunteer Bureau, Naval Academy volunteers, Anne Arundel Community College and others.

MARYLAND VETERANS TRUST FUND

Since its inception in 2010, The Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (Trust Fund), has collected \$220,529.89 in donations and has received \$34,266.50 from the Maryland Lottery. The Trust Fund has distributed \$129,840.68 in grants and loans to Maryland veterans and eligible dependents in need of financial assistance. With authorization by the Maryland General Assembly, the Trust Fund acquired 501(c)3 status in 2014, permitting the Trust Fund to procure more donations and help more veterans in need.

Since 2010, The Maryland Veterans Trust Fund has provided over \$129,000 in grants and loans to Maryland veterans and eligible dependents in need of financial assistance.

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OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

“Thank you very much for coming to speak to us at St. Margaret’s last Sunday. You spoke so eloquently on behalf of all those who have served our Country. We have many veterans in our parish and they particularly appreciated learning about all you do.” –Veteran and St. Margaret’s Church member

“This was a particularly good newsletter- thank you! I found the pictures nice in this one also. Kudos! Let’s all be grateful for a Governor and First Lady who take a personal and true interest in veterans...” –Electronic newsletter recipient

Outreach & Advocacy’s (Outreach) mission is to develop innovative ways to seek out and inform Maryland’s veterans about benefits, services, and incentives that are available from federal, state and local agencies and solicit feedback from veterans regarding their needs for additional services.

Traditional Outreach Strategies:

In 2015, with a staff of two, Outreach continued to build upon the established model of reaching out to veterans and families through attendance at a diverse number of events. Examples of venues included homeless disability expos, family resource fairs, and workshops where Maryland veterans and their families have the opportunity to speak with a staff member, and to ask questions regarding any number of benefits and services. Events are sponsored by Federal, State, and Local Governments as well as community based non-profit organizations. In addition, Outreach continues to partner with the Maryland National Guard and U.S. Reserve Components to staff resource tables at events. A Benefits Specialist is sometimes available to immediately assist veterans with filing claims for disability and compensation. There is no cost to the Department for participating in these events, and no cost to the veterans and family members to attend.

In 2015, the Outreach Program attended 133 outreach meetings and events, more than double the total (57) from the previous year. Over 4,100 providers, veterans, and family members were addressed face to face as a group or spoken with individually to educate and answer questions regarding benefits and services.

E-Outreach Strategies:

The Department’s website, veterans.maryland.gov, is managed by Outreach. The site has been streamlined to give users quick access to information, from both a desktop and mobile/handheld device. The website gives users access to a wide variety of local, state, and federal resources pertaining to, but not limited to, employment, health care, housing, and benefits.

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In 2015, the MDVA website received 101,362 visits, and 10% increase from 2014, with 76% of those visits new.

Of the 223,402 individual page views, the top five landing pages on the site were:

- Home Page (70,706)
- Cemetery and Memorial Program (22,112)
- Tax Benefits (14,732)
- Service Program (10,733)
- Jobs and Training (7,929)

Constant Contact, an online marketing tool, is used by Outreach to maintain email addresses and to share information. With support from the Maryland Department of Transportation and Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, as well as traditional outreach, the email list grew from 22,618 to 33,598 contacts in 2015. ***In the last two years, the number of subscribers has more than doubled.*** Constant Contact provides a forum to share job related information and general news and announcements with the veteran and provider community.

In 2015, 26 issues of the bi-weekly Department electronic newsletter were distributed, providing articles of interest, photos, and Department and partner news. Over 120,000 copies of the newsletter were opened.

In 2015, 39 emails sent to contacts were 'Jobs for Maryland Veterans' or special Department job announcement emails. Over 180,700 copies of job related emails were opened.

Out of 95 bulk emails sent, the remaining consisted of flag lowering notices, and time sensitive announcements or updates.

In addition, the Outreach program *received and personally responded to over 300 emails to the mdveteransinfo@maryland.gov contact us email account.* This number does not account for the growing number of inquiries and questions sent to Outreach staff members individual Maryland.gov email accounts.

With Facebook and Twitter, the Outreach Program continues to expand its use of social media. Facebook currently has 1,862 'Likes', an increase from 1,574 in 2013. *In 2015, a total of 249 Facebook posts reached over 71,000 Facebook followers,* enabling Outreach to share more information on resources available to Maryland veterans.

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Twitter is used in conjunction with Facebook to tweet updates and news @MDVeterans. The Department has 965 followers on Twitter, a 23% increase from 739 in 2014.

Via the eBenefits information system, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs enables veterans and dependents to request information from their state veterans affairs offices. *In 2015, Outreach responded to over 2,000 e-benefits requests for information.*

Mailings and Written Publication Outreach Strategies:

In continuing support of returning Maryland veterans, *Outreach mailed 2,500 new veteran informational packets in 2015.* Mailings include U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and state program information pertaining to, but not limited to, health care, employment and mental health services.

The Veterans State Benefits and Services Guide was updated in June 2015. *A total of 10,000 guides were printed.* All copies were distributed via mail or at outreach events and plans are underway to design and print an updated version in early 2016. The Guide remains available on the Department's website.

2015 Outreach & Advocacy Program Highlights

- Department wide, over 92,500 individual contacts were made at events or via phone with veterans, family members, community providers and the general public
- The Department website received 101,362 visits, a 10% increase over 2014
- The Outreach email distribution list reached 33,500 subscribers, doubling in size the last two years
- Outreach distributed over 2,500 'Welcome Home' packets to Maryland Veterans
- The Program responded to over 2,000 requests for MDVA information from the eBenefits system
- The Program distributed 10,000 printed copies of the State Benefits and Services Guide
- In 2015, a total of 249 Facebook posts reached over 71,000 Facebook followers, enabling Outreach to share more information on resources available to Maryland veterans.

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INITIATIVES

Outreach to State Agencies and Associations

In an effort to streamline and be more efficient in providing outreach to providers, the following agencies or associations comprised of government agencies received formal briefings or resource tables on veteran services and benefits in 2015: Department of Aging, Department of Disabilities, Maryland Correctional Administrators Association, Maryland Department of Transportation/Motor Vehicle Administration, Maryland Criminal Justice Association, Maryland Library System

Employment and Employer Support:

In support of economic development and job creation, the Department launched on July 1 **Operation Hire Maryland**. The initiative now has 97 employers registered to participate in support of creating a statewide veteran friendly business network. On June 4, a training event held at the Community College of Baltimore County provided coaching on the benefits of hiring veterans. Resources were provided to over 80 businesses on best practices for recruitment and retention of veterans in the civilian work place. The first networking meeting, held October 27, had over 30 employers present. Three more meetings are scheduled between January and June of 2016. In addition, 39 job related bulk emails were sent to Department email subscribers, with over 180,000 of sent emails opened.

Small Business:

The Department continues to collaborate with the Department of Commerce on the **Veteran Owned Small Business No-Interest Loan Program**. A copy of solicitation notices for procurements with the **Veteran Small Business Enterprise goal** are shared on the Department website. In addition, solicitations with the 1% goal are distributed by way of email to small business assistance agencies and programs located in Maryland.

Homelessness

Recognizing the need to improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable veterans, Outreach continues its' participation on the Maryland Interagency Council on Homelessness and serves as the Chair of the Veterans Work Group. The work group held five meetings this year and continues to work towards improving the range, availability, and coordination of housing and services necessary to end veteran's homelessness. A survey, distributed to the Continuums of Care in Maryland, was conducted and results will be compiled early next year. The results will help inform the work of the group in 2016.

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Commissions/Boards

Five commissions/boards advise the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs in various areas.

MARYLAND VETERANS COMMISSION

The Maryland Veterans Commission advises the Secretary on all issues relating to veterans, including veteran related legislation with meetings held quarterly. Individuals may be called upon to represent the Department at speaking engagements for commemorative events, present Governor's Proclamations on Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies, and provide recommendations when changes are requested for the Cemetery & Memorial Program.

The Commissioners represent veteran groups and the eight congressional districts in the State. Commissioners are appointed to five-year terms by the Governor, who also names the Chair. The following organizations or categories are represented:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| American Ex POWs | Korean War Veterans Association, Inc. | Pearl Harbor Survivors Association (Honorary nonvoting member) |
| American Veterans AMVETS | Marine Corps League | Polish Legion of American Veterans |
| Catholic War Veterans | Maryland Officer's Association | The American Legion |
| Paralyzed Veterans of America | Member at Large | The Retired Enlisted Association |
| Disabled American Veterans | Military Order of the Purple Heart | Iraq/Afghanistan War Veteran |
| Fleet Reserve Association | National Association of Black Veterans | Veterans of Foreign Wars |
| Jewish War Veterans | Vietnam Veterans of America | Women Veterans |

MARYLAND VETERANS HOME COMMISSION

The Maryland Veterans Home Commission advises the Department on issues relating to State veteran homes and interacts with veterans and other organizations to disseminate information concerning Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, in St. Mary's County, the only State veteran home facility in Maryland. The Commission has fourteen members and meets quarterly. Eleven members are named to five-year terms by the Governor with Senate advice and consent. Three members serve ex-officio, representing the Governor, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

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MARYLAND MILITARY MONUMENTS COMMISSION

The Governor's Commission on Maryland Military Monuments was established in January, 1989 and was transferred to the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs in October 2008. The Commission inventories Maryland military monuments, assigns responsibility for maintenance of each monument and prepares educational and tourism materials for public distribution. Since 1989, the Commission has sponsored or co-sponsored the cleaning and restoration of 104 Maryland military memorials; 51 of these are provided routine maintenance by the Commission. Appointed by the Governor, the Commission consists of up to twenty-one members. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs serves as chair of the Commission with meetings held quarterly.

WAR MEMORIAL COMMISSION

The War Memorial Commission shares custody and supervision of the War Memorial Building and the War Memorial Plaza with the City of Baltimore. Both were erected in 1927 in Baltimore to honor Marylanders who died in World War I. The War Memorial Building lies directly across from City Hall. The Memorial welcomes approximately 2,900 visitors each month. Maintenance costs are shared equally by the State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore. The Commission meets quarterly and consists of ten members who serve five-year terms; five are appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with the Governor's approval, and five by the Mayor of Baltimore.

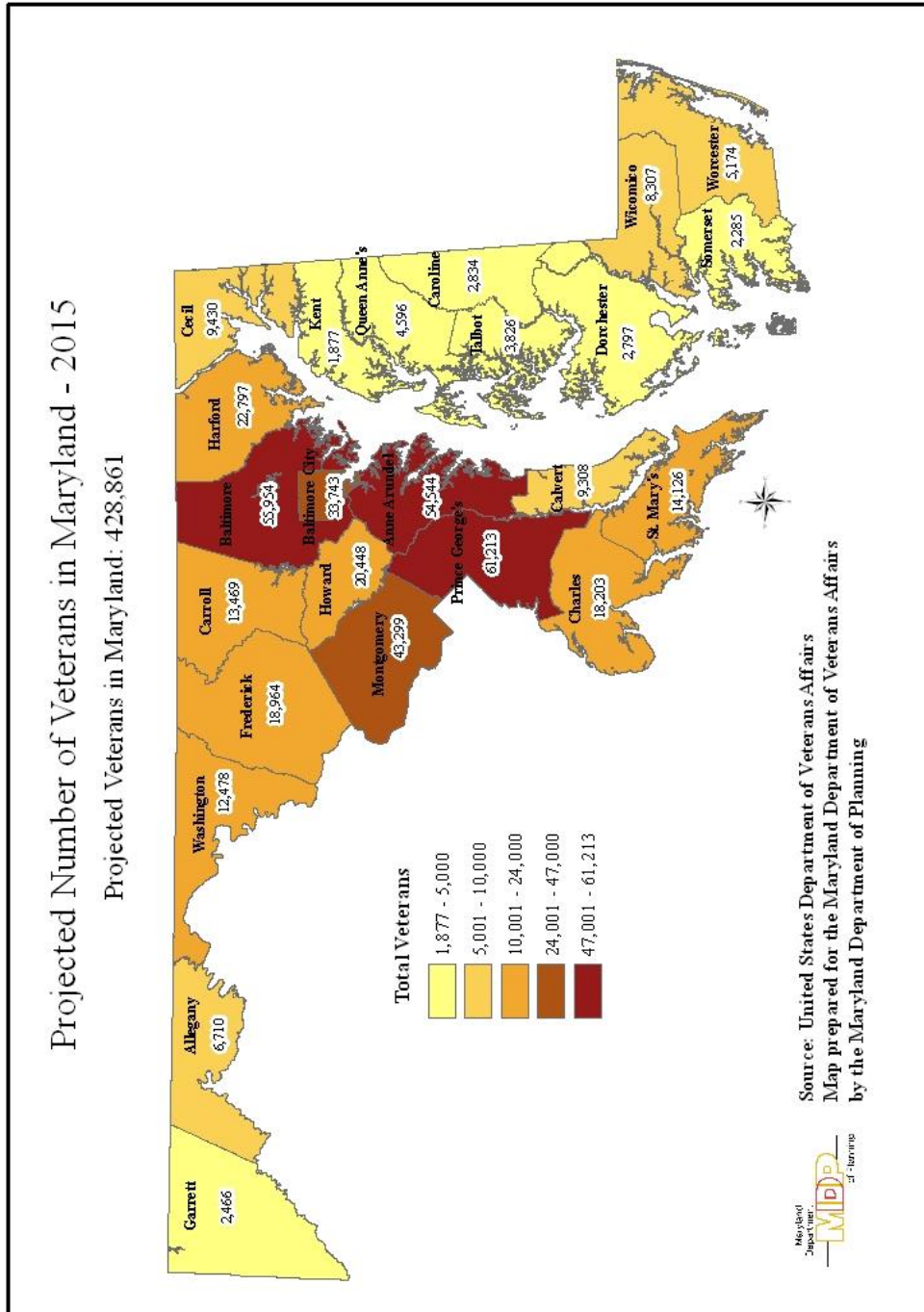
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Attachments

- 1.1 Map: Projected Number of Veterans in Maryland in 2015
- 1.2 Maryland Veteran Demographics
- 1.3 Table: 2015 Projected Number of Veterans by County
- 1.4 Key Performance Measures for Veterans Represented by the Department

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ATTACHMENT 1.1



*Note: Numbers contained on the map are a projection only

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ATTACHMENT 1.2

| Maryland Veteran Demographics | |
|---|------------------------|
| Veteran Population | 437,762 |
| Wartime Veterans | 330,283 |
| Gulf War (includes OIF/OEF/OND) | 166,645 |
| Vietnam Era | 127,455 |
| Korean Conflict | 30,846 |
| World War II | 19,225 |
| Peacetime | 107,480 |
| Veterans age 65 and over | 175,000 (approximated) |
| Female | 57,627 |
| Male | 380,136 |
| Veterans receiving disability compensation | 72,454 |
| Veterans receiving pension | 3,343 |
| Dependency & Indemnity Compensation Beneficiaries | 6,077 |
| Death Pension Beneficiaries | 2,465 |
| Veterans enrolled in the VA Health Care System | 152,011 |

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Census Data, as of 9/30/14

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ATTACHMENT 1.3

| 2015 Projected Number of Veterans by County | | | |
|---|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Allegany | 6,710 | Howard | 20,448 |
| Anne Arundel | 54,544 | Kent | 1,877 (smallest) |
| Baltimore | 55,954 | Montgomery | 43,299 |
| Calvert | 9,308 | Prince George's | 61,213 (largest) |
| Caroline | 2,834 | Queen Anne's | 4,596 |
| Carroll | 13,469 | St. Mary's | 14,126 |
| Cecil | 9,430 | Somerset | 2,285 |
| Charles | 18,203 | Talbot | 3,826 |
| Dorchester | 2,797 | Washington | 12,478 |
| Frederick | 18,964 | Wicomico | 8,307 |
| Garrett | 2,466 | Worcester | 5,174 |
| Harford | 22,797 | Baltimore City | 33,743 |

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Projected Number of Veterans in Maryland 2015

ATTACHMENT 1.4

| Key Performance Measures for Veterans Represented by Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (Fiscal Year 2015) | |
|---|--------------|
| Inputs | |
| Potential # of Veterans to be Served | 437,762 |
| Number of Veteran Contacts | 88,338 |
| Outputs | |
| Claims filed and developed on behalf of service connected disabled veterans | 5,287 |
| Outcomes | |
| Total of awards to veterans and survivors represented by MDVA | \$26,455,935 |

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The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs is a State Government Executive Department with a service mission to assist veterans, active duty service members, their families and dependents, in securing benefits earned through military service. Under the Department of Veterans Affairs are four major programs: the Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Program; Charlotte Hall Veterans Home; the Veterans Service and Benefits Program and the Outreach and Advocacy Program.