

A Summary of the Council's Activities for 2024

Our Council was established in July 2001 by proclamation of the SJC Board of County Commissioners.

The VC has grown exponentially since that time and today is considered one of the most active and engaged Councils in the State supporting our veterans. Each year, the VCSJC working with the local MOAA Chapter conducts a Memorial Day Service at the St. Augustine National Cemetery. We also host a Veterans Day program each Nov. 11 at Anastasia Baptist Church that is attended by well over 1000 attendees.

In December each year we conduct the Wreaths Across America program at SANC that usually has about 500 in attendance.

The Veterans Council was responsible for establishing a Veterans Treatment Court about 8 years ago that has been highly successful. We have graduated 116 veterans from the program to date. We currently have 40 veterans in the pipeline.

In March of this year, the VCSJC in collaboration with Home Again St. Johns purchased a motel in St. Augustine and have repurposed it into a homeless shelter for veterans. This has provided us with the ability to remove over 20 homeless veterans from the street.

In addition to the above activities, the VCSJC meets with needy veterans on a very regular basis to provide them with help with their financial needs such as rent, food, insurance, car payments, house and automobile repairs, utility payments, security deposits and first month rent when moving into apartments or a house. We also purchase gas cards as well as food cards for those veterans who are in need of gas and food. We conduct a monthly visit to Aldi's to restock the food pantry at the local VSO office. The Veterans Council has a goodly amount of donated clothing and household furniture that we provide those veterans and their family who are in need of such. 2024's total expenses for veterans assistance was \$130,733.

In addition to the above items that all have a financial implication, we assist veterans with assistance in arranging for honor guards for funerals, Memorial services, and other similar needs by family members.

We support two local high schools JROTC program honor cadets with a \$1000 scholarship each year at graduation. We recently made a \$1000 donation to the Young Marines in Jacksonville to help with their upcoming trip to Pearl Harbor. We also participate in the St. Joseph's Academy Veteran's Heritage Project and donate \$1000 to support this program each year.

The secretary of the Veterans Council provided a Thanksgiving meal to all the veterans housed at Veterans Village as well as each of the staff.

The Veterans Council provided two donated vehicles to veterans during the year as well as several bicycles and E-Bikes.

A huge assortment of donated clothing was provided to hurricane victims in Western North Carolina and more will be donated as we accumulate a sufficient quantity.

Our income for the Council comes from donations from local organizations, various grant programs, individual donations, estate settlements, and gifts in kind. Our income for 2024 was slightly over \$144,000

Our Board is made up of all volunteers and no member of our Board receives any compensation.

Bill Dudley

Chairman

Veterans Council of St. Johns County. Inc.