



GREENE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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VISION STATEMENT

Greene County Veterans Service Agency is dedicated to providing the highest quality of service to the Veterans and their families.

MISSION

- Educate Greene County Veterans and their eligible or advocating family members, about the various benefits Veterans have earned
- Represent and guide our Veterans and their eligibly family members, in obtaining benefits and services through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and other state, local, community, and private sources
- Make our Veterans an economic force through education, employment and business development

SUMMARY

Our Agency provided services to approximately 11,000 veterans, veteran family members and veteran advocates in 2020. We saw roughly, a 20% decrease in services or, about 3900 less contacts; however, a number of factors affected our ability to serve our Veteran Community: this agency is non-essential, therefore shut down from March 23rd until June 8th, and operating at half-time for the majority of 2020; COVID protocols for our office space prohibited us from allowing walk-ins for simple services, this entire agency relocated full time at the Greene County EOC running the Logistics Section handling the acquisition and distribution of New York State and Federal disaster provisions, from March 23rd through April 30th; the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in New York City and the co-located Department of New York American Legion Service Officers offices were completely shut down, leaving county veterans service agencies unassisted for the majority of 2020, into 2021; the VA Medical Centers were operating at limited capacity and only providing essential medical services; and, the veteran population declined in Greene County as it did statewide. In April 2020 we began the normally year-long process to start filing VA Compensation and Disability Claims online, and completed the requirements by October 2020. Our full time staff included our Director, one Veterans Benefits Representative, and one Senior Clerk. In June 2020 we hired a part time

SUMMARY cont.

Veterans Services Driver to eliminate over-time expenditures, and in September 2020 we hired an additional part time Veterans Services Driver as the Albany Stratton VAMC began opening more services and our ridership increased. All of our programs and services are provided directly through our agency; while, all benefits and payments received by our clients are provided directly from federal and state sources. The operating cost of this agency for 2020, was 0.79% of the total federal, health, education, pension, life insurance, and low income pension benefits received by Greene Veterans and their eligible family members from Federal Expenditures, of \$32,401,000. Additionally, Veterans reduced its operating cost by 33% midyear, and coming slightly under (\$624.38) our actual operating cost for 2019.

DEMOGRAPHICS

There are approximately 790,000 veterans in New York State, and approximately 3400 veterans are estimated to live in Greene County. Greene County's total population only represents roughly 0.25% of the total estimated New York State population, our veterans represent four times that, or 0.8%, in relation to the total state veteran population. The veteran population density in Greene County is approximately 80 veterans per 1000 residents, which is among the highest in the state, as well as many other regions of the country.

Approximately 18% of Greene County's estimated veteran population are receiving VA Disability Compensation for service-connected disability or VA Disability Pension for nonservice-connected disabilities, a 1.6% total increase from 2019. Approximately 31% of our veterans are utilizing VA Healthcare, also up 1% from 2019.

Though the VA statistical model shows Greene County's veteran population declining, it is only a hypothetical model based on various other data; e.g., morbidity and mortality rates of veterans, so-called snow-birding of retirees, or the overall reduced armed forces populations available to separate from active duty and repopulate veteran categories.

See figure 3 for FY 2019 to FY 2020 demographical breakdown of Compensation recipients in Greene County.

The Agency goals for 2020 were:

- Continue eliminating unnecessary paper files
- Continue to digitize the remaining sections of approximately 13,000 existing paper files
- Continue to increase overall productivity, ensuring as many Greene County veterans as possible are aware of and obtaining their VA and other veterans benefits under our representation
- Continue to streamline interagency services, by coordinating with other local agencies and departments who refer clients
- Continue to partner with local businesses and the County Clerk in maintaining and expanding the Greene County Return the Favor Program
- Proudly honor two deserving veterans in our Honor a Vet Memorial and Veteran of the Year ceremonies

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- VA Disability Compensation Claim Representation
 - Represent veteran clients against the Department of Veterans Affairs in Disability Compensation claims
 - Provide guidance to veterans obtaining necessary medical evidence
 - Develop and submit each claim to American Legion Department Service Officer for review
 - Submit accepted claims to the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office for rating or approval
 - Interact with Congressional office to ensure all viable claims are accurately rated
- VA Educational Benefits
 - Assist veterans in obtaining their Certificate of Eligibility for the GI Bill

PROGRAMS & SERVICES (CONT)

- Assist eligible veterans' dependents in applying for Chapter 35 Survivor and Dependents Assistance for Education
- Advise veterans of potential education benefits for self and dependents
- Advise higher education institutions of CFR Title 38 Part III Chapters 30 through 36 regulations as necessary
- VA Pension Claim Representation
 - Represent eligible wartime veteran clients or their surviving spouses in VA Disability Pension claims
 - Assist veteran, family members and advocates in obtaining necessary financial information
 - Assist same in obtaining necessary medical information
 - Develop and submit claims to American Legion Department Service Officer for review
 - Submit accepted claims to the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office for approval
- VA Healthcare and Enrollment
 - Guide veterans through application process
 - Provide explanation of benefits
 - Assist veterans in disclosing their financials to the VA
 - Screen applicants for potential VA Disability Compensation claims
 - Assist veterans who were denied VA Healthcare
 - Help veterans navigate VA Healthcare benefits and billing
 - Advocate for veterans who are not receiving appropriate care at VA medical facilities

PROGRAMS & SERVICES (CONT)

➤ County Veterans Transportation Program

- Provide daily (weekday) transportation for county veterans to VA medical facilities
- Pick up and drop off veterans at their homes
- Provide transportation as requested for disability compensation assistance
- Transport veterans after hours or weekends for special events as requested
- Create and maintain eligibility requirements and standard operating procedure
- Ensure vehicles, staff, and services meet all federal, state and local standards

➤ Events

- Hold two Honor a Vet Ceremonies each year
 - One memorial ceremony in May for a chosen deceased veteran
 - One Veteran of the Year Ceremony in November for the chosen living veteran
 - Supervise a nine member panel of committee members
 - Create and disseminate submission packets annually
 - Review and assess submissions for accuracy and eligibility
 - Coordinate with Buildings and Grounds, Sheriff's Department, Catskill Police Department, and Greene County Courthouse for location set up and traffic control.
 - Coordinate with local entertainers, clergy, and veterans service and other organizations to ensure each ceremony is tailored to the honoree and his/her local community
- Other Veterans Events

➤ Coordinate with Greene County Agencies and Departments

- Coordinate with County Clerk's office in obtaining and submitting veterans discharge documents

➤ PROGRAMS & SERVICES (CONT)

- Coordinate county's Return the Favor program, periodically canvassing local businesses to provide discounts to area veterans and/or update their existing offers with County Clerk's office who maintains accurate listing

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

Personnel

GCVSA Director	04/11/2011 to present
Veterans Benefits Representative	06/25/2018 to present
Senior Clerk	11/12/2019 to present
Veterans Service Driver – Full Time	10/11/2011 to 06/19/2020
Veterans Services Driver – Part Time	06/08/2020 to present
Veterans Services Driver – Part Time	09/28/2020 to present
Veterans Service Chauffeur – Part Time	Vacant
Veterans Service Chauffeur – Per Diem	Vacant
Honor a Veteran Committee Chairman (Volunteer)	01/01/2019 to present

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

COMPARATIVE OPERATING EXPENSES		
YEAR	2020	2019
SALARIES	\$150,919.02	\$176,785.33
RENT	\$26,506.35	\$25,898.96
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$1,534.26	\$2,547.38
POSTAGE	\$93.80	\$629.07
REPAIRS	\$3,513.10	\$119.94
TRAVEL	\$7,235.98	\$8,826.63
OTHER PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$55,488.03	\$43,268.36
EVENTS	\$0.00	\$27,928.08
VEHICLE INSURANCE	\$2,580.33	\$2,482.50
IC/IT	\$2,604.69	\$2,583.41
TOTAL	\$250,475.56	\$291,069.66
NYS REIMBURSEMENT	-\$10,000.00	-\$10,000.00
DONATIONS		-\$20,789.38
TOTAL OP COSTS	\$240,475.56	\$260,280.28

CLAIMS & BENEFITS

Claims Filed Directly By Greene County Veterans Service Agency Staff

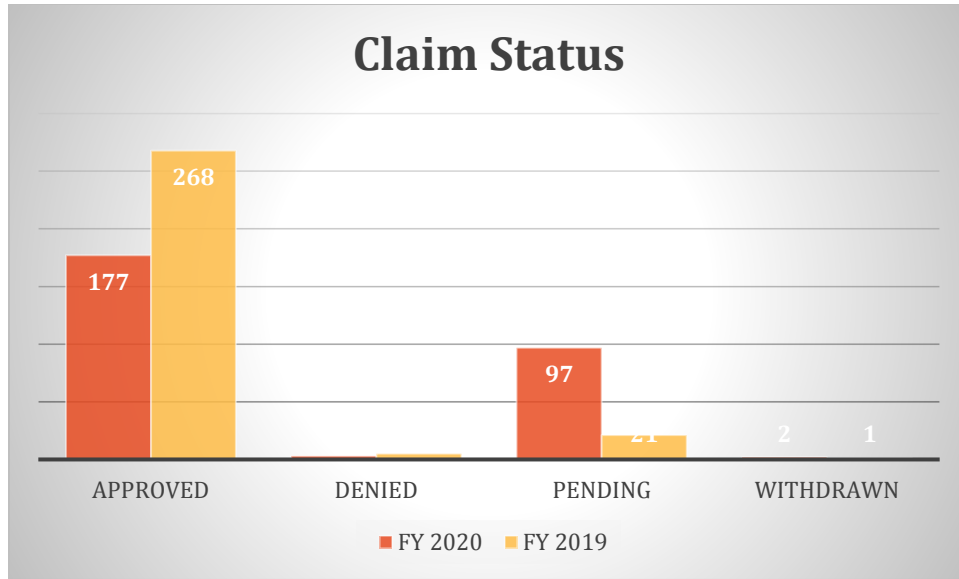


Figure 1

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Processing Centers shut down throughout most of 2020. This severely affected our ability to file VA Claims; and, this had also brought the claims processing to halt, causing NEMR era delays in approval, causing a 441% increase in pending claims (claims our veterans filed that have not yet been decided by the VA) from 2019 to 2020.

CLAIMS & BENEFITS (CONT)

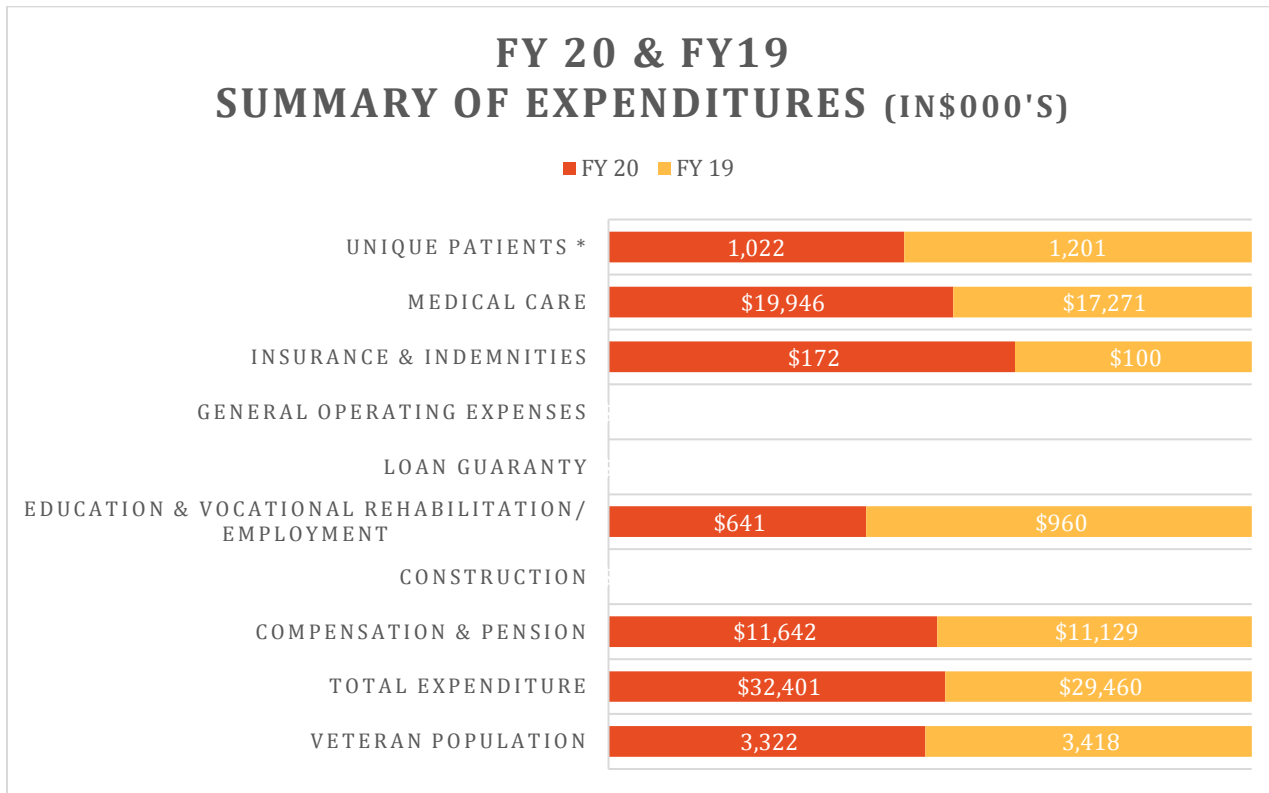


Figure 2

Department of Veterans Affairs expenditures show another steep increase to over \$32 million, with a nearly \$3 million increase in medical care expenditures, and roughly a half million dollar increase in total Compensation and Pension expenditures to Greene County's disabled veterans. We saw a successful year in the face of the COVID 19 Pandemic resulting in a 20% plus decrease in total claims filed, and a 440% increase in pending claims. Once again, these expenditures directly correlate with the outstanding work of our entire Veterans Service Agency Staff, who spent nearly two (2) months operating the Greene County EOC Logistics Section, working out of the Greene County Emergency Operations Center while continuing to serve our Greene County Veterans Population and beyond.

CLAIMS & BENEFITS (CONT)

FY2019 vs FY2018 VA Disability Compensation Recipients in Greene County

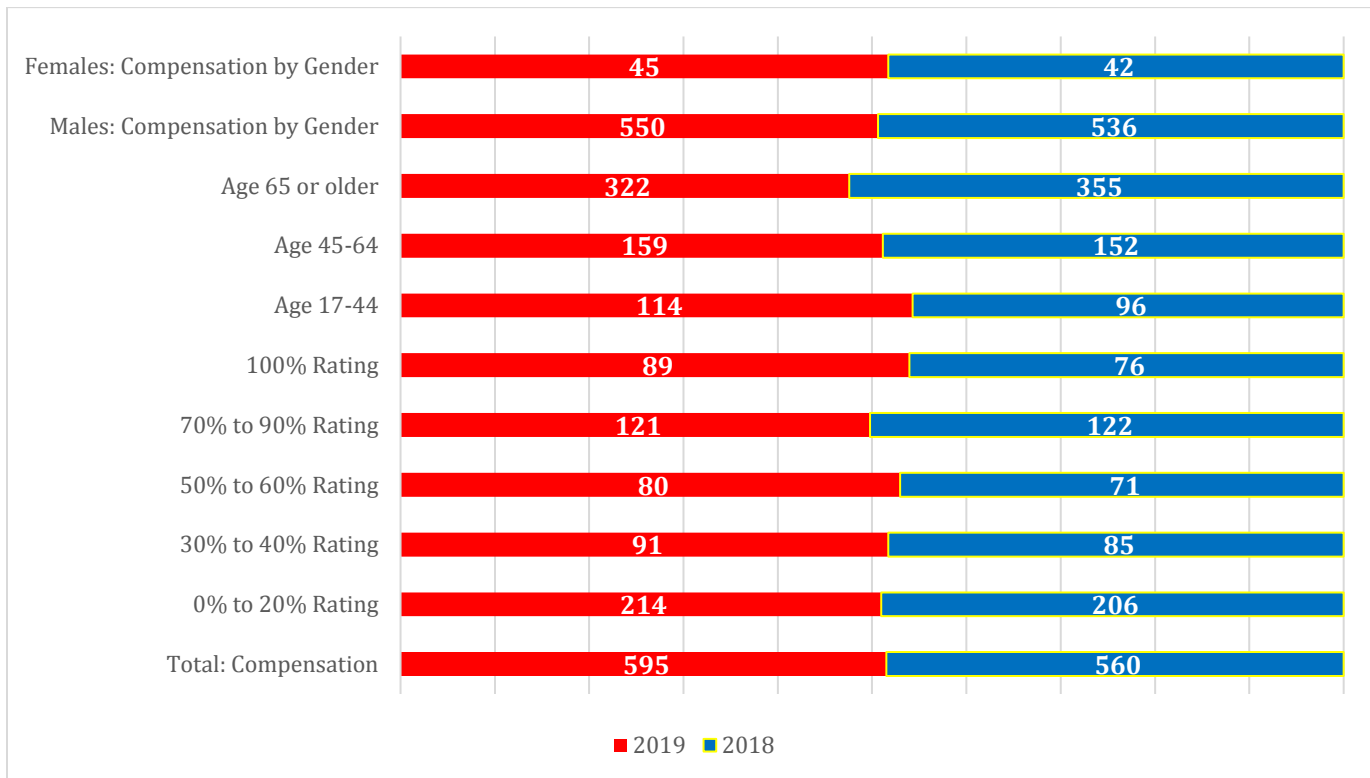


Figure 3

The demographical breakdown of VA Disability Compensation benefits is calculated by the Department of Veterans Affairs Data and Statistics Section. The newest information available is provided approximately 19 months after the close of each year. For this reason, the newest dataset available for this report is FY2019. Overall, the demographics may appear unremarkable; however, we saw a 6% increase in overall VA Disability Compensation recipients and a 15% increase in 100% ratings, with all but one other rating group increasing as well, between 2018 and 2019. A 100% service-connected single veteran without children received \$3,057.13 per month while the same with a spouse received \$3,227.58, and an additional \$84.69 per month per child under age 18, or \$273.58 per month per child between the ages of 18 and 23 who attend an approved education program.

STATISTICAL REPORTS (CONT)

2020	Claims Filed	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Persian Gulf	Afghanistan	Other	Veteran	Dependent/Other	Telephone	Walk-In	Mail	Fax	Other
Jan	18	43	20	115	51	33	96	90	193	118	58	61	46	283
Feb	13	38	40	80	25	14	85	66	162	78	54	51	45	228
Mar	10	27	38	65	17	11	96	53	152	73	47	56	29	205
Apr	12	36	20	49	22	8	86	56	130	74	47	42	23	186
May	10	38	28	75	27	19	79	59	155	87	44	57	26	214
Jun	12	18	15	86	53	15	84	64	143	73	51	48	35	207
Jul	34	25	26	110	55	24	111	66	205	95	72	56	48	271
Aug	26	26	32	157	67	17	151	137	221	140	90	71	57	358
Sep	23	31	24	102	45	25	157	85	210	131	55	77	32	295
Oct	12	31	34	93	53	20	116	99	178	117	69	72	19	277
Nov														
Dec														
TOTALS	170	313	277	932	415	186	1061	775	1749	986	587	591	360	2524

Disability Compensation	Pension	Healthcare	Education	Insurance	Home Loan	Burial	Medals	Military Records	Gold Star Parent	Blind Annuity	Supplemental Burial	Home Loan	Park Passes	Hunting/Fishing	Employment	State Vets Home	Medals	Property Tax	Other
101	34	31	4	0	4	34	4	104	0	15	0	4	1	1	5	3	4	2	38
57	39	27	6	0	4	37	2	80	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	4	2	2	19
71	41	11	7	0	3	45	4	62	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4	2	4
45	48	12	3	1	4	40	2	39	0	0	1	4	4	4	4	0	2	15	8
60	39	29	5	0	0	33	1	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	4	14
71	16	21	8	4	8	32	0	78	0	0	2	8	1	4	1	0	0	13	9
99	48	9	5	2	8	51	5	60	0	0	6	8	3	2	0	0	5	16	11
171	44	24	7	2	2	50	1	84	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	1	10	10
115	48	11	5	6	8	43	2	69	0	0	0	8	2	1	1	0	2	11	25
115	35	24	9	0	3	40	0	46	0	5	2	3	1	1	2	0	0	9	26
905	392	199	59	15	44	405	21	683	0	23	13	44	12	13	20	7	21	84	164

Figure 4

STATISTICAL REPORTS (CONT)

TRANSPORTATION

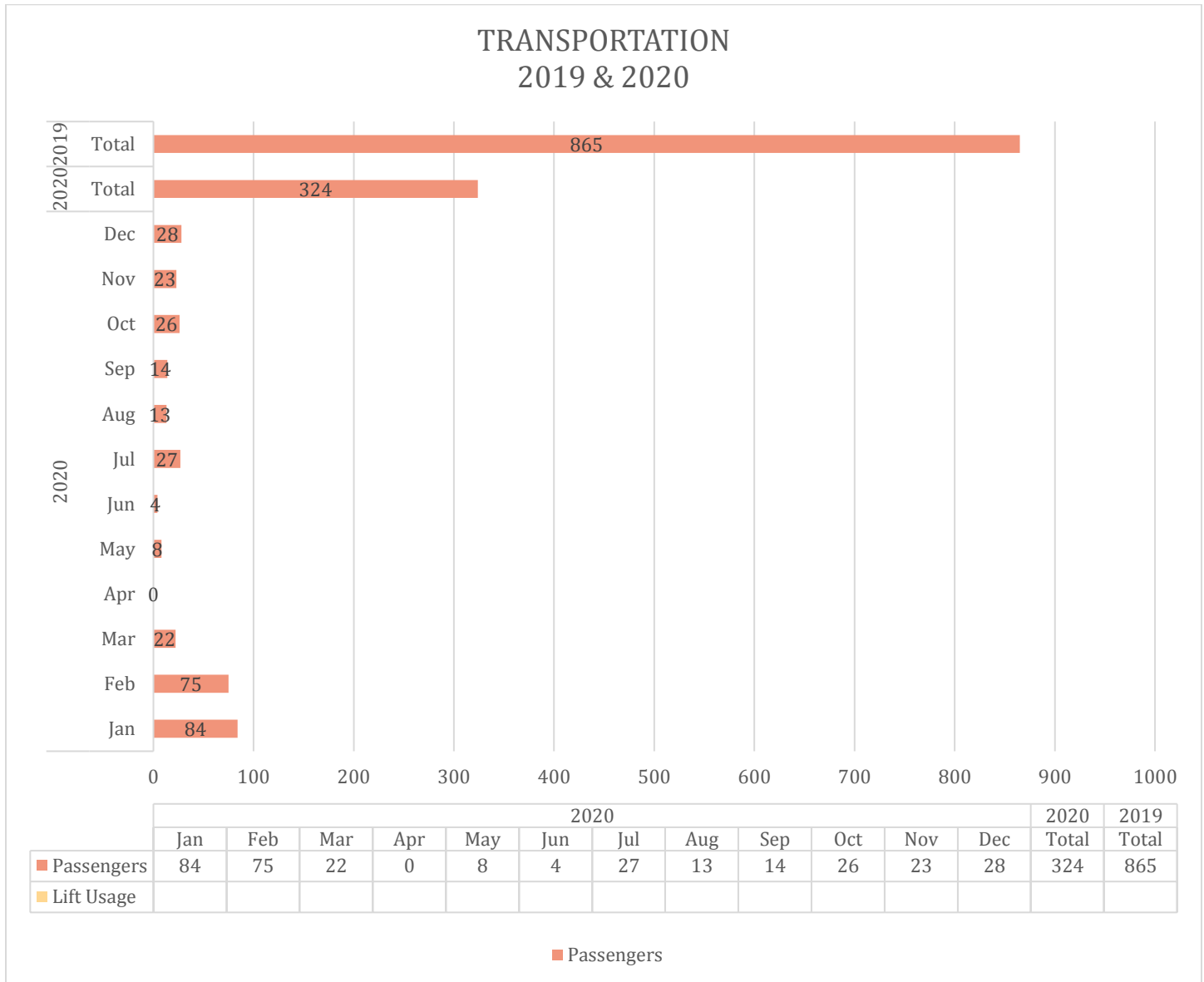


Figure 3

We maintain a fleet of three vehicles: 2006 Ford Focus, 2010 Chevy Van, and a 2016 Ford Transit Van with Wheelchair Lift. This service saw a steep decline in usage due to the COVID 19 Pandemic and ongoing limitations to services provided at the Albany VAMC. Most notably, the VA Adult Day service that provides weekly respite to caregivers and quality medical and non-medical services to senior patients in need of meals, social programs, as well as vitals and medication administration oversight and education. However, in light of this decline, we have

STATISTICAL REPORTS (CONT)

been able to provide more transportation to Greene County Veterans in need of rides to local private medical facilities. To date, many of these services still have not been reinstated at the Albany Stratton VAMC. We do however, anticipate their resumption in the near future.

EVENTS

Each year, this section is our prized piece. The most fun to describe and reminisce over as we browse through event photos. However, once again, COVID 19 impacted our services. Due to gathering restrictions and concern for the health of our Veterans Community as well as our staff, we were unable to host either of our bi-annual Honor a Vet Ceremonies in 2020.

The Agency goals for 2021 are:

- Continue eliminating unnecessary paper files
- Continue to digitize the remaining sections of approximately 13,000 existing paper files
- Continue to increase overall productivity, ensuring as many Greene County veterans as possible are aware of and obtaining their VA and other veterans benefits under our representation
- Continue to streamline interagency services, by coordinating with other local agencies and departments who refer clients
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LONG TERM GOALS

- Continue to advise, support, and interact with our local Veterans Service Organizations

- Continue to advise and support our veterans in obtaining 100% compliance with the NYS Veterans School Tax Exemption; regardless of NYS reimbursement. Currently, only four out of ten school districts within or overlapping Greene County townships, have approved the exemption; we are advised on each status solely by members of the respective veterans' communities for each district.
- Continue to maintain an excellent standard for all services provided to our community's veterans, families, and advocates.

CONCLUSION

Though 2020 was a difficult and challenging year for Greene County Veterans Service Agency, as well as our Veterans Community, we managed to continue to provide quality services to our veterans and their families with minimal decreases in our statistical productivity. We newly implemented online capability to file claims and check claims status. We reduced our spending, and saw a \$3 million increase in VA total expenditures to our veteran population regardless of an estimated reduction in total our veteran population. We will continue to strive to meet our annual and long-term goals, and as always, to grow and excel each year.