



GREENE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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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

In 2022, our Agency provided services to around 21,110 veterans, veteran family members, and veteran advocates. (Figure 6, page 15) We witnessed an approximate 16% increase in services, which translates to about 2970 more interactions than in 2021. The number of Compensation and Pension claims filed by our office increased by 34% from 2021 to 2022, resulting in a total of 209 claims filed. Notably, there was a significant increase in federal expenditures for Greene County. These advancements occurred despite a decrease in the county's veteran population. These increments observed throughout the year underscore our Agency's strong commitment to supporting local veterans. In order to support these advancements our Agency's administrative structure underwent a significant overhaul to enhance its functionality.

This reorganization entailed the introduction of the Deputy Director position, which provided crucial support to the Director and contributed to more efficient decision-making and service

delivery. The Deputy Director assumed a primary responsibility for managing the transportation program to help facilitate the expansion of services to better cater to the veteran population – ensuring veterans have access to private as well as VA healthcare services. Additionally, recognizing the necessity for streamlined coordination of outreach efforts and organization of veterans’ events, we strategically elevated the senior clerk position. The enhanced role of the Administrative Assistant now plays a pivotal role in collaboration with the Director to extend our presence within the veteran community and to plan impactful events that honor and support those who have served our nation. This approach ensures a more comprehensive and focused veteran outreach, facilitating deeper connections and support for our veterans.

We were privileged to continue the tradition of hosting both of our Greene County Honor a Veteran Ceremonies this year, celebrating the exceptional contributions of our nominees. This marked the first year post-COVID-19 where we could successfully hold both ceremonies. Our Memorial Ceremony in May, paid tribute to the commendable US Army Air Force Veteran, SSGT Rudolph W. Phillips. SSGT Phillips, a Belly Gunner, served in the 368th Bombardier Squadron aboard a B17 flying fortress. He displayed remarkable bravery when his aircraft was shot down over the Bay of Biscay, leading to his capture by enemy forces and enduring over a year as a prisoner of war. SSGT Phillips’ unwavering dedication and sacrifice for our nation will forever be etched in memory.

For Veteran of the Year, our Agency proudly honored U.S. Army SGT David R. Darling. SGT Darling served in the US Army Military Police Battalion, serving one tour of duty in Vietnam. After honorably separating from the service, SGT Darling returned home to continue his public service in Law enforcement with over 52 combined years with Saugerties PD, The NYS Police, and as Police Chief of Catskill. David also served his community throughout many years in the American Legion, Catskill Republican Club, Town of Catskill Zoning Board, Greene County

Honor A Vet Committee, Catskill Little League Board of Directors, and St. Patrick's Board of Education and more. SGT Darling's remarkable service and commitment continue to inspire those around to work towards a better and brighter future for the community and nation.

In 2021, our Agency secured a promise of PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Project funding from New York State to implement our Greene Vet2Vet Peer Support Program, and a contract was initiated with the Hudson Valley National Center for Veteran Reintegration. 2022 witnessed the successful acquisition of this funding, culminating in the opening of our Vet2Vet doors in September. Since its inception, Vet2Vet wasted no time, actively engaging with local veterans to integrate an array of impactful programs and events. Among these initiatives are Moto Monday (coffee hour), Wellness Walk Wednesday, Bowling Nights, Veteran Breakfasts, Family Fishing Day Out, veteran and family peer support groups, veteran support groups, and more.

A significant milestone was achieved with our Director's inception of the Connect to Protect Greene Guardians Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day. This event was designed to shed light on mental health and suicide awareness and prevention within our most vulnerable occupational communities – Military and First Responders – hosting over 80 vendors from resources across the state, and an estimated 500-plus attendees. We also co-hosted two veterans' resource fairs in partnership with New York State Senator Michelle Hinchey, alongside the Greenville American legion Post 291, and Athens American Legion Post 184.

All of our programs and services are delivered directly by our agency, while our clients receive their benefits and payments directly from federal and state sources. **The operating cost of this agency for 2022, was less than 1% of the total federal expenditures encompassing health, education, pension, and life insurance benefits received by Greene Veterans and their eligible family members, which amounted to \$32,771,000.00.** Furthermore, our Agency demonstrated efficient financial management, concluding 2022 with a remarkable 23% under-

budget performance, yielding savings of nearly \$110,000.00 for Greene County taxpayers, compared to projected expenditures.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the US Census Bureau, New York State is home to approximately 665,257 veterans. In Greene County, an estimated 3,129 veterans reside, with a margin of error of 22%. Data from the Department of Veteran Affairs Fiscal records, spanning from October 1, 2020 through April 20, 2022, reveals that 10,932 Greene County Military Veterans are receiving VA Disability Compensation. Additionally, 497 military veterans are beneficiaries of the Low-Income Veterans Non-Service Connected Pension. These figures collectively indicate that at least 11, 429 individuals who have served in the US Military call Greene County, New York, home. Notably, this count accounts solely for those receiving VA benefits. Considering these statistics and the 22% margin of error recommended by the 2020 US Census report, the 2022 estimate of 3,129 veterans is likely, and possibly significantly, lower than the actual number of US military Veterans residing in Greene County.

This data underscores the comparison between Greene County's total population and its veteran population. While Greene County's total population represents just 0.25% of the estimated New York State population, the ratio of veterans in Greene County to the total veteran population of New York State is nearly twice that, at 0.45%. Remarkably, Greene County boasts a veteran population density of approximately 70 veterans per 1000 residents, ranking among the highest in the state and numerous other regions across the country.

The Agency goals for 2022 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
- Continue to work with our elected officials and veterans service organizations to provide and facilitate access to resources to our veterans.
- Implement our PFC Joseph P Dwyer Vet2Vet Program

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
 - 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
- County Veterans Transportation Program
 - Provide daily (weekday) transportation for county veterans to 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
 - Connect to Protect Greene Guardians
 - In 2022, we successfully hosted our first-ever annual "Connect to Protect Greene Guardians" event, with a primary focus on suicide awareness and prevention for some of our most vulnerable groups: Military, Veterans, and First Responders.
 - The event was executed flawlessly, attracting over 60 vendors and several elected government officials.
 - With our unwavering commitment to eradicating suicide, we aim to continue organizing such events as long as the risk of suicide persists.
 - Veteran Resource Fairs

- Partner with New York State Senator Hinchey and her team in hosting Veterans Resource Fairs, around Greene County.
 - Network with Federal, State, and local community partners in providing support and services to local veterans.
 - Resource Fair Locations for 2022: Greenville American Legion Post 291, Athens American Legion Post 184.
- PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Funding / Greene County Vet2Vet
- Through the Joseph P. Dwyer state funding program, we have contracted with the Hudson Valley Center for Veterans Reintegration Organization to create our very own Greene County Vet2Vet program.
 - The purpose of the program is to provide support, programs, and assistance to veterans reintegrating back into civilian life.
 - Greene County Vet2Vet offers weekly peer to peer support veteran support groups, veteran and family peer support groups, a weekly coffee hour, weekly wellness walks, veteran and family breakfasts and much more.
- Coordinate with Greene County Agencies, Departments, and local partners
- Coordinate with County Clerk’s office in obtaining and submitting veterans discharge documents
 - 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
Deputy Director	02/14/2022 to present

Full-Time Veterans Benefits Rep.	06/25/2018 to 02/14/2022
Part-Time Veteran Benefits Rep.	12/2021 to Present
Senior Clerk	11/12/2019 to 06/10/2022
Administrative Aide	12/2022 to Present
Veterans Services Driver—Part-Time	08/30/2021 to present
Veterans Services Driver—Part-Time	05/09/2022 to present
Veterans Services Driver—Part-Time	09/28/2020 to 06/13/2022
Veterans Services Driver—Per Diem	06/08/2020 to present
Veterans Services Driver—Full-Time	09/12/2022 to Present
Honor a Veteran Committee Chairman	01/01/2004 to present

The Agency’s administrative structure underwent a significant overhaul to enhance its functionality. This reorganization entailed the introduction of the Deputy Director position, which provided crucial support to the Director and contributed to more efficient decision-making and service delivery, by Due to its expansion, the transportation program promoted Part-Time Veteran Services Driver, Charles Schreck, to a full-time driver, in order to meet the new increased demand for services. Additionally, recognizing the necessity for streamlined coordination of outreach efforts and organization of veterans’ events, we strategically elevated the senior clerk position. The enhanced role of the Administrative Assistant now plays a pivotal role in collaboration with the Director to extend our presence within the veteran community and to plan impactful events that honor and support those who have served our nation. This approach ensures a more comprehensive and focused veteran outreach, facilitating deeper connections and support for our veterans.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

COMPARATIVE OPERATING EXPENSES		
YEAR	2021	2022
SALARIES	\$173,909.54	\$192,846.22
LEASE	\$26,901.03	\$27,297.78
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$506.57	\$3,585.04
POSTAGE	\$139.99	\$6,514.74
REPAIRS	\$119.94	\$222.33
TRAVEL	\$10,272.56	\$20,165.44
OTHER PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$82,483.67	\$79,802.57
EVENTS	\$0.00	\$0
VEHICLE INSURANCE	\$2,596.44	\$3,232.10
IC/IT	\$2,717.18	
TOTAL	\$291,069.66	\$333,666.22
NYS REIMBURSEMENT	(\$8,000.00)	(\$25,000.00)
DONATIONS		59,536.00
TOTAL OP COSTS	\$283,069.66	\$249,130.22

Figure 1

In the past year, our agency experienced increased administrative expenses due to various factors. Notably, salary expenses increased as a result of promotions, step increases and annual raises.

Furthermore, the Agency's transportation costs saw an uptick during the year. The elevated fuel costs may have had a role to play, but more significantly, it was the expansion of our

transportation program. We extended our transportation services to include all medical appointments, not just those at the local VA medical center. This expansion reflects our commitment to providing comprehensive support, making it more convenient for veterans to access their essential medical care wherever it is required.

Despite these increased expenses, our Agency received a generous donation from G.I. Joe in the amount of \$599,536.00. Additionally, we were grateful to receive a State Aide to Localities grant in the amount of \$25,000.00. This grant, which has increased from the previous year, provided essential financial support, empowering us to continue expanding and enhancing our services for veterans in Greene County.

CLAIMS & BENEFITS

Claims Filed Directly By Greene County Veterans Service Agency Staff

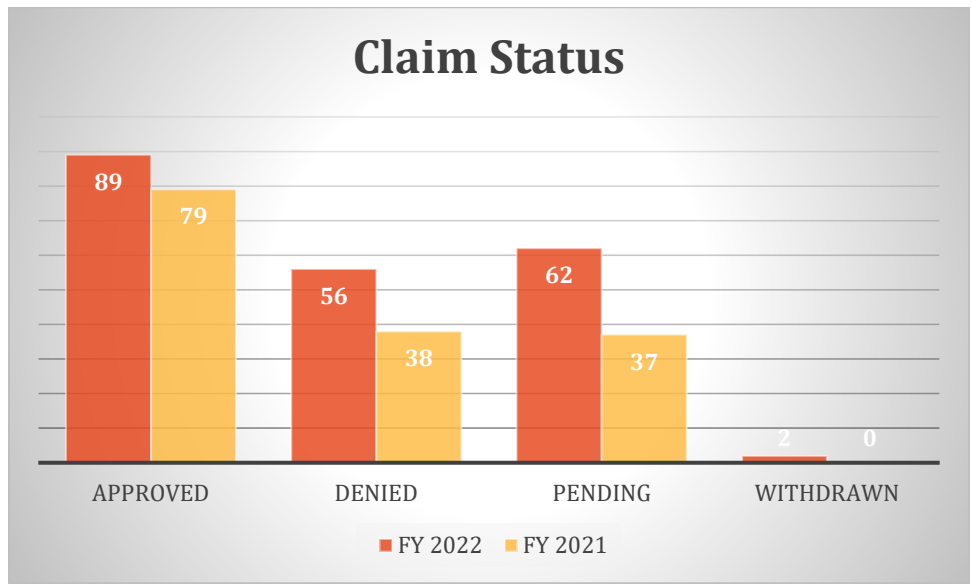


Figure 2

With COVID-19 Protocols lifted, Compensation and Pension expenditures for Greene County increased exponentially from 2021-2022 by approximately 26%. Besides the lifting of COVID-

19 Protocols in 2022, another reason for the increased expenditures may be the passing of one of the largest healthcare and benefit expansions in VA history. The PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care and Compensation, for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras. Our Agency, filed approximately 209 compensation and pension claims throughout 2022. Of these 209, approximately 43% of the claims submitted were approved and 27% of claims were denied. Due to the VA’s significant influx in compensation and pension claims across the US, a major backlog in claims processing from the VA has taken place. In 2022, approximately 30% of claims filed by our agency were pending VA review going into 2023. Figure 1 above demonstrates the 2021 to 2022 comparison.

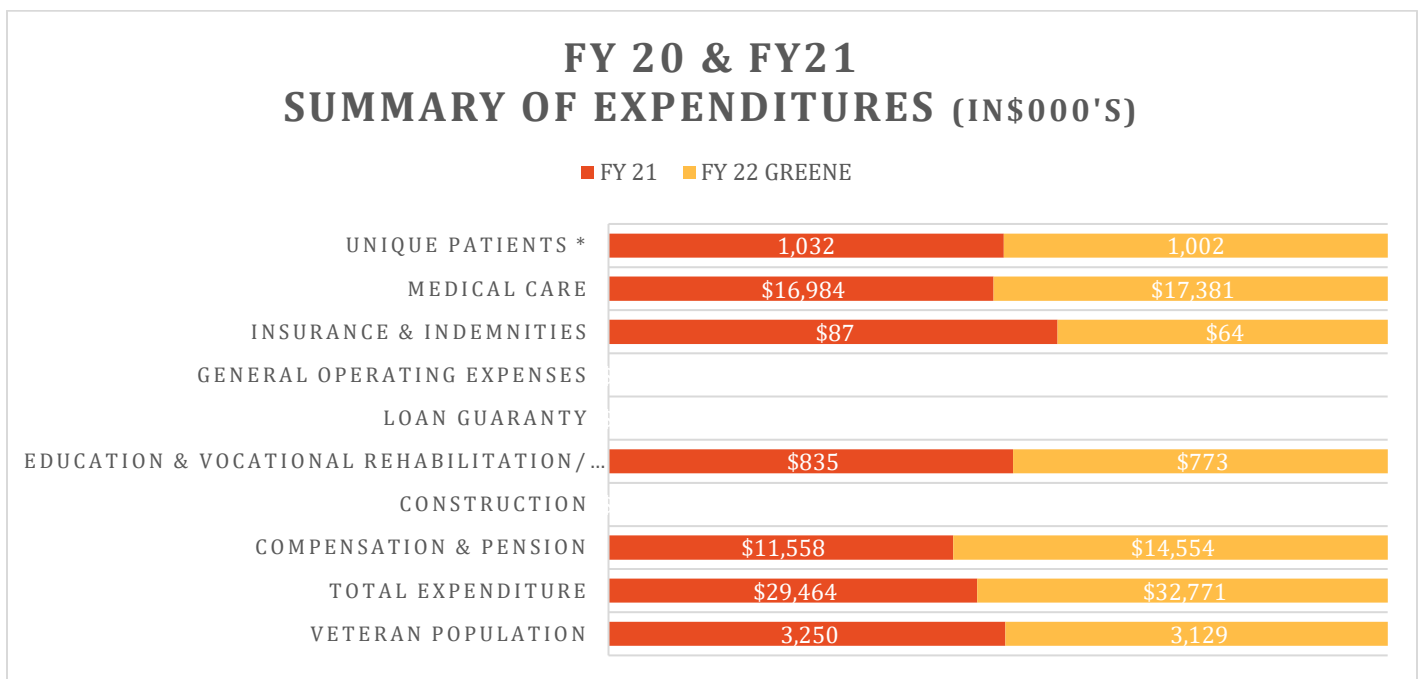


Figure 3

Department of Veterans Affairs expenditures show an overall increase for 2022, almost entirely due to the 26% increase in VA Compensation and Pension spending. With that, VA medical expenditures have seen 2% increase, despite the 3% decrease in number of unique patients seen by the VA medical Centers. It is possible that an increase in Compensation and Pension

expenditures may have a direct correlation to the increase in medical care expenditures due to the fact that in many cases, a veteran receiving VA compensation or pension opens up eligibility for VA healthcare. Insurance and Indemnities Expenditures and Education & Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures are variables that fluctuate based on veterans eligibility and personal decisions to use such benefits. Insurances and Indemnities are based on decisions made by veterans upon their separation from the US Military, and subsequent death – these are death benefits to beneficiaries. Education & Vocational Rehabilitation are also elective programs overseen directly by the college of attendance and the VA Benefits Administration. Overall, we saw a successful year resulting in a 34% increase in total claims filed in 2022, and a projection of steady increase in Compensation Expenditures upon receipt of those 2022 Decisions. Pending claims are still elevated compared to pre-COVID rates.

FY2019 vs FY2018 VA Disability Compensation Recipients in Greene County

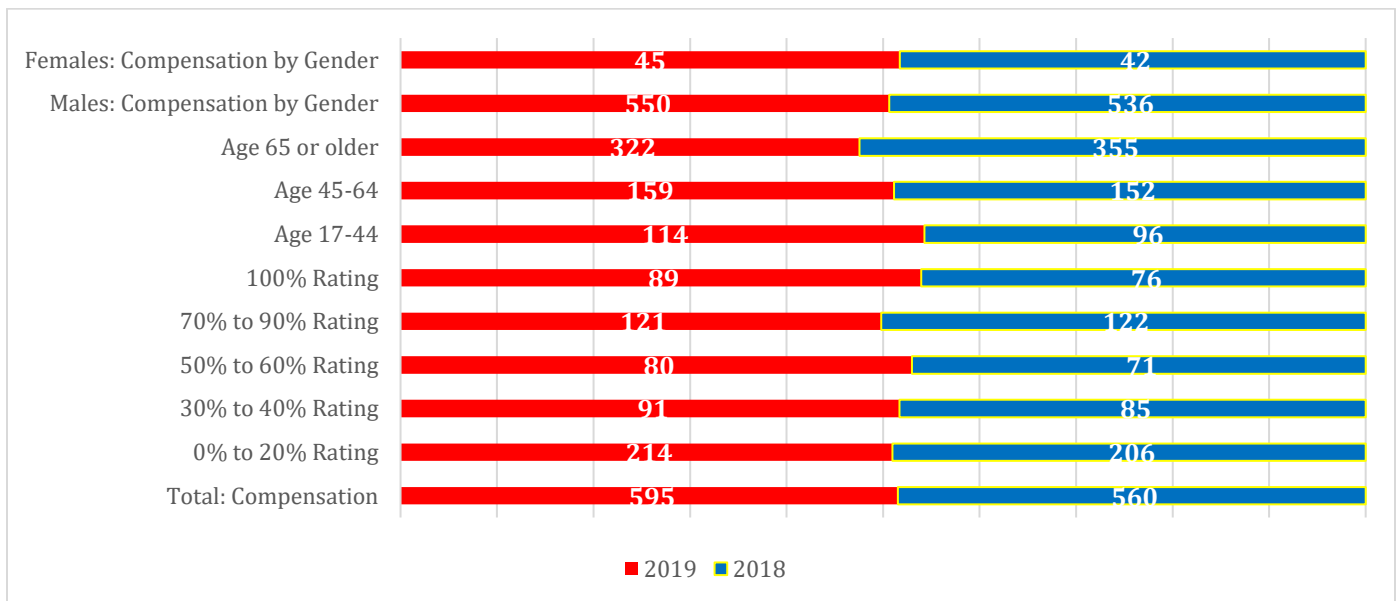


Figure 4

The demographical breakdown of VA Disability Compensation benefits is calculated by the Department of Veterans Affairs Data and Statistics Section. The newest information 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.

The following information in Figure 5, was provided to us by the Department of Veterans Affairs Data and Statistics Analysis and Change Manager, at the New York Regional Office – this table describes a VA Fiscal year of October 1, 2020 through April 30, 2022 for all Greene County Veterans receiving Service-Connected Disability Compensation (Live Compensation – which indicates these are living veterans); Veterans receiving Non-Service-Connected Disability Pension (Live Pension – the same); and the surviving family members receiving both Death Indemnity Compensation (for spouses and dependents of veterans who died as a result of military service) and Survivor Pension (a low income disability pension for spouses and dependents of war-era veterans who meet certain edibility criteria).

Country	State	County Name	Benefits	Gross Amount	Count
United States	New York	GREENE	DIC - Death Indemnity Compensation	\$1,650,171	1,153
			Live Compensation	\$16,106,327	10,932
			Live Pension	\$435,694	497
			Survivor Pension	\$230,860	287
Grand Total				\$18,423,052	12,869

Figure 5

Month	Claims Filled	ERA Totals							Federal Services										State Services										TOTALS
		WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Persian Gulf	Afghanistan	Peacetime	Other	Disability Compensation	Pension	Healthcare	Education	Insurance	Home Loan	Burial	Medals	Military Records	Medical Records	Gold Star Parent Annuity	Blind Annuity	Sup Burial	Home Loan	Park Passes	Hunting/Fishing License	Employment	State Vets Home	Medals	Other	
Jan	7	7	5	75	69	43	42	94	135	15	15	6	2	1	1	10	5	8	0	0	0	3	1	0	6	1	3	4	558
Feb	1	0	1	32	17	65	1	0	135	5	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	94	376
Mar	8	3	3	56	23	27	41	162	65	3	17	0	0	0	0	0	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	54	476	
Apr	4	0	0	56	238	434	116	479	339	61	158	0	0	0	5	26	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	0	0	206	2191	
May	11	451	26	216	25	1347	1148	145	189	43	159	32	112	50	1149	30	132	3	0	0	0	43	0	0	47	0	25	2755	8138
Jun	10	39	43	364	1012	83	397	1520	170	43	399	36	117	52	992	35	35	96	42	0	0	52	0	0	114	0	30	46	5727
Jul	11	5	117	251	188	316	244	1755	213	33	417	12	3	37	51	21	79	113	2	0	51	37	13	23	7	1	21	1183	5204
Aug	23	141	570	1521	2854	2653	6535	13766	143	7	276	99	0	43	22	22	45	27	0	5	1	43	27	13	59	4	31	13766	42696
Sep	8	3	55	166	91	99	238	505	76	21	333	8	6	41	29	1	18	45	0	0	1	11	1	3	8	1	1	361	2130
Oct	14	40	73	1837	723	663	657	2110	323	30	117	13	7	106	92	33	18	174	0	0	1	106	14	45	125	4	33	502	7860
Nov	7	53	119	561	833	680	476	2912	199	36	97	290	17	73	68	122	131	127	0	1	1	73	19	6	199	2	122	2094	9318
Dec	12	10	20	121	823	69	193	611	61	11	43	2	4	1	29	2	52	32	0	0	0	5	7	5	5	0	2	45	2165
TOTALS	116	752	1032	5256	6896	6479	10088	24059	2048	308	2033	498	268	404	2439	302	537	628	44	6	55	393	82	95	629	13	269	21110	

Figure 6

TRANSPORTATION

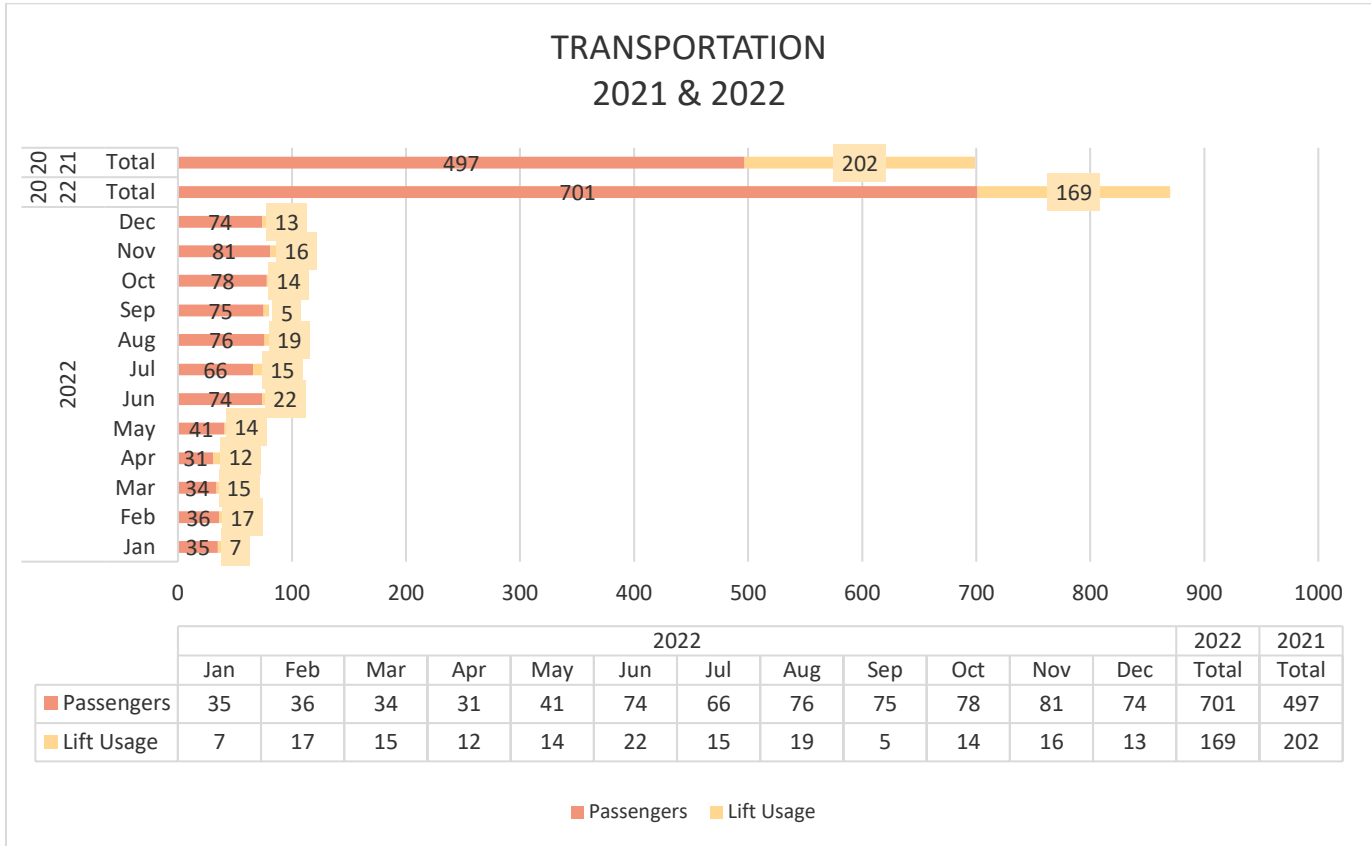


Figure 7

We maintain a fleet of four vehicles: 2006 Ford Focus, 2011 Chevy Van, and a 2016 Ford Transit Van with Wheelchair Lift, and a 2022 Ford Transit Connect Minivan. This service saw a significant increase in usage as COVID Pandemic protocols have continued to wind down. We are still not seeing the usage rates we saw prior to COVID – this in part is due to programs that have not resumed, 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, this year we opened transportation up to non-VA care appointments, to serve a large population of Greene County Veterans who are unfortunately not eligible to receive VA health benefits. Logistically, this has been a challenge to the office, additionally, the VA has been shifting to alternative treatment options, such as their innovative Telehealth Program, that allows patients to consult with physicians in the comfort of their own home.

EVENTS

We were privileged to continue the tradition of hosting both of our Greene County Honor a Veteran Ceremonies this year, celebrating the exceptional contributions of our nominees. This marked the first year post-COVID-19 where we could successfully hold both ceremonies. Our Memorial Ceremony in May, paid tribute to the commendable US Army Air Force Veteran, SSGT Rudolph W. Phillips. SSGT Phillips, a Belly Gunner, served in the 368th Bombardier Squadron aboard a B17 flying fortress. He displayed remarkable bravery when his aircraft was shot down over the Bay of Biscay, leading to his capture by enemy forces and enduring over a year as a prisoner of war. SSGT Phillips' unwavering dedication and sacrifice for our nation will forever be etched in memory.

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Honor A Vet Committee, Catskill Little League Board of Directors, and St. Patrick's Board of Education and more. SGT Darling's remarkable service and commitment continue to inspire those around to work towards a better and brighter future for the community and nation.

This year we also hosted our first ever annual Connect to Protect Greene Guardians, Suicide Awareness and Prevention Day. This event hosted over 80 vendors at Catskill's historic Point. Our office received great feedback and plans on continuing the event annually. We also co-hosted two resource fairs with Senator Hinchey's office alongside the Greenville and Athens American Legion Post 291 and 184. These outreach events have had a significant impact on the veteran community and our efforts in providing support to them.

The Agency goals for 2023 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
- 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
- Continue to work with our elected officials and veteran's service organizations to provide and facilitate access to resources to our veterans.
- Improve our PFC Joseph P Dwyer Vet2Vet Program

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.
- Encourage all towns in Greene County to participate in the Hometown Heroes Program
- Expand services to underserved areas of Greene County
- Encourage local veterans services providers across departments, to seek appropriate joint accommodations – a One Stop – for veterans to conveniently seek assistance without travelling from one location to another
- Expand office space to house Agency and Vet2Vet Program
- Continue to maintain an excellent standard for all services provided to our community's veterans, families, and advocates.

CONCLUSION

The year 2022 marked a great year for the Greene County Veteran Service Agency. Not only were we able to meet all of our 2022 Goals and provide exemplary service to our veterans, but we were able to expand our reach in the veteran community conducting outreach and hosting meaningful events. We improved our online capability to file claims and check claims status, which helped in more efficient and effective claims processing. We saved 77% or \$107,833.83, from our projected operating costs; and, VA expenditures such as, Medical and Compensation and Pension saw major increases. We will continue to strive to meet our annual and long-term goals, and as always, to grow and excel each year.