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VETERANS COALITION



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Military Family A Fund

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2024 ANNUAL REPORT

West Michigan Veterans Coalition

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WEST MICHIGAN VETERANS COALITION



The West Michigan Veterans Coalition (WMVC) exists to ensure that local Veterans, Service Members, and their Families can access the support they need, when they need it most. Thanks to private donations and dedicated partners, WMVC provides food, transportation, and financial assistance quickly during times of hardship.

We proudly serve the 13 counties of Central West Michigan, where over 100,000 Veterans, Service Members, and their Families call home. As the demand for support grows, so does our commitment to delivering resources with compassion, urgency, and respect.

WMVC believes that all members of the United States Armed Services — and their Families — should have access to the benefits they have earned and the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for taking the time to explore our annual report. Inside, you'll find the stories, statistics, and milestones that made this past year meaningful. We're proud to share our impact with you, and deeply grateful for the partners, donors, and advocates who make this work possible.

Together, we serve those who served us.

Our Year in Review

A Message from the Chair of the Board



Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

As we reflect on 2024, I am proud to share the meaningful strides we've made together at the West Michigan Veterans Coalition (WMVC). Each milestone we reached, each family we supported, and each connection we deepened was made possible through your partnership, generosity, and belief in our mission. This year, we continued to provide crucial services to veterans and their families throughout our region—from safe and reliable transportation to medical appointments and daily errands, to emergency financial support for housing, utilities, and urgent needs.

We awarded scholarships that helped ease the burden of higher education and opened doors for both veterans and their dependents. We also expanded our outreach through regional meetings that brought together dozens of partner organizations, creating space for collaboration, learning, and new possibilities.

Behind each of these efforts is a simple but powerful goal: to ensure that every veteran in West Michigan feels supported, seen, and empowered to thrive. Whether it's a ride to a doctor's appointment, assistance with rent during a difficult season, or access to higher education, our work is rooted in service and compassion.

Looking Ahead: Building Awareness, Expanding Support

In 2025, we are embracing a renewed focus on marketing and outreach. We recognize that many veterans and their families still don't know we exist—or don't realize the breadth of support available to them through the Coalition. To change that, we're reevaluating how we share our message and are seeking the help of our board, community partners, and generous donors to amplify our reach.

In addition to awareness-building, we are committed to developing new programming that directly supports veterans in the workforce. From career transitions to skill development, we believe there is tremendous opportunity to uplift and equip veterans as they navigate life after service.

With Gratitude

None of this work would be possible without you—our donors, volunteers, partners, and advocates. Thank you for showing up for West Michigan's veterans year after year. Thank you for giving generously, connecting us to those in need, and helping us continue to grow.

Together, we are building a stronger, more connected veteran community—one that honors service not just in words, but in action. On behalf of the entire Board of Directors, thank you for standing with us.

With appreciation and respect,

PAUL RYAN

Chairman of the Board
West Michigan Veterans Coalition



Our Programs



Military Family Assistance Fund

A direct service that provides limited financial assistance during a time of hardship for mortgage/rent payments, utility payments, home repairs, vehicle repairs, and other unforeseen circumstances.



Armed Forces Scholarships

Scholarship opportunities for Veterans, Service Members and their dependent Family Members that are continuing their education through a college, university, or trade school.



Share-a-Meal

A direct service that provides assistance to those experiencing food insecurity.



Partner Collaborations

Strategic meetings and events that connect organizations, employers, and educators with essential military competency insights and valuable local, state, and national resources. These collaborations foster informed decision-making and stronger support networks for military-affiliated professionals.



Freedom Ride Transportation Program

Provides rides at no charge to Veterans, Service Members, their dependent Family Members, and Caregivers in Kent and Eastern Ottawa Counties for medical appointments, employment, grocery shopping, etc.



Having been involved with this coalition since its inception, I have witnessed its remarkable growth into the stellar veteran non-profit alliance in Michigan. The WMVC has adeptly supported numerous veteran initiatives with professionalism, significantly enhancing the veteran resource network in West Michigan”.

- Program Participant

Cover Story

WMVC Speaker Series: Unlocking the Potential of Your Veteran Workforce June 5, 2024 in Grand Rapids, MI

Nearly 50 attendees gathered for a morning of powerful discussion, connection, and learning. Many participants, despite not having military backgrounds themselves, expressed appreciation for the chance to better understand military culture and the unique strengths veterans bring to the workforce.

Our distinguished panel tackled important conversations around the military-to-civilian career transition, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges veterans face. The keynote address, delivered by Mike Tate of Gentex, was a standout moment. He generously shared the journey of building a successful military business resource group within his company—offering real-world strategies, insights, and inspiration that resonated deeply with the audience.

Veterans hold a wealth of experience, discipline, and leadership—assets that are often underrecognized in civilian industries. Events like this help bridge the gap and open doors to better understanding, appreciation, and integration of veteran talent in the workplace.

Paul Ryan, Chairman of the Board of the West Michigan Veterans Coalition addresses the audience.

Our Impact in 2024

\$37,100

Provided by the Military Family Assistance Fund to Veterans & their Families

44

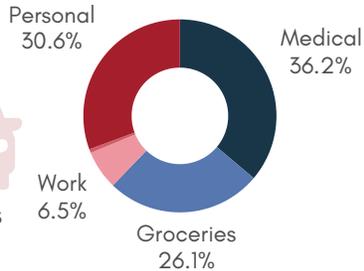
Veterans and their Families were assisted by the Military Family Assistance Fund

Provided **\$450**

to Veterans and their Families experiencing food insecurity

310

Rides provided to Veterans & their Families

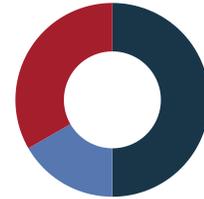


Rides provided assisted with procuring groceries, getting to work, and medical appointments

5

Armed Forces Scholarship Awards Presented

John Irwin Scholarship 2



Armed Forces Dependent Scholarship 1

410

Attendees at WMVC hosted events such as Community Partner Meetings and Speaker Series

Participated in **20+**

Community programs to share about WMVC

Programs WMVC Partnered with in 2024

- Muskegon County Veteran Services
- Kent County Veteran Services
- Disability Advocates of Kent County
- Mid Michigan Community Action Agency
- Volunteers of America
- MiWorks!
- Michigan Army National Guard Family Programs
- Vet Center Grand Rapids

Veteran Testimonials



SHEONA N.
John Irwin Scholarship Recipient

I am honored to receive this support and appreciate the opportunity it provides as I continue my education. Thank you once again for your assistance and for the critical work the West Michigan Veterans Coalition does to support veterans and their families.

"I was able to get up without the chair going all the way up. I actually was able to go outside and take a small walk".

The West Michigan Veterans Coalition purchased a lift chair for a Veteran that had mobility issues getting in and out of a seated position. The Veterans' previous one had broken which limited his mobility. The Veteran was very excited when it was delivered.

"Everything happened around the holidays and I just didn't think I could get any assistance so I really appreciate the effort".

A Veteran requested assistance with rent due to loss of work and waiting on VA disability.

Thank You 2024 Donors

BUSINESS DONORS

Armed Forces Thanksgiving
Balls & Pins Bowling Tournament
Culver's of Hudsonville
Gentex Corporation
Grand Rapids Foam Technologies, Inc.

Haworth, Inc.
Steelcase, Inc.
Timbers Inn Restaurant & Tavern
Riverside Liquors, LLC
Rumble on the Rogue

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Kenneth Adamy	Brent Case	Sean Murphy	Deb Unseld
Jill Arehart	Linda Vos-Graham &	Dan & Kathy Oaks	Julie Rowan
Meredeth Bellmore	Ken Graham	Paul Ryan	Emily Ruimveld
Jillian Betzer	Geraldine Holwerda	Jean Siefken	Nika
Ryan Burke	Steven Lipnicki		

2024 Board of Directors

Paul J. Ryan, Chair

U.S. Navy, Retired
Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve
Military Officers Association of America

Beau Brummel

Marine Corps Veteran
Managing Partner, Bluewater Hayes

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Training Specialist
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CEO, Bluewater Hayes

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Vice President, Commercial Team Lead
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Steven Lipnicki

Assistant Dean of Students (Retired)
Grand Valley State University
Community Leader and Advocate

Faye Richardson-Green

Veteran Spouse
Member, National Ladies Auxiliary
Lifelong Community Steward

Deb Unseld

Veteran Spouse
Programs & Outreach Coordinator
West Michigan Veterans Coalition

Armed Forces Thanksgiving



The West Michigan Veterans Coalition is proud to recognize Armed Forces Thanksgiving as our largest donor and a steadfast champion of those who have worn the uniform.

Since its founding in 2014 by a group of committed Grand Rapids business leaders, Armed Forces Thanksgiving has become more than an annual event – it is a powerful tradition of gratitude, education, and community connection. Held each November, the event creates a space for individuals of all ages to understand, honor, and express appreciation for the men and women who serve – and have served – in our Armed Forces.

What makes Armed Forces Thanksgiving truly impactful is not only its heartfelt celebration, but its tangible support. Event proceeds, after expenses, are donated to the West Michigan Veterans Coalition, helping us continue our mission of connecting Veterans, Service Members, and their Families with essential services across the region.

Their generosity enables us to respond quickly to local Veterans in need – providing food, transportation, financial assistance, and resource navigation. Their partnership ensures that our work reaches further and touches more lives each year.

We extend our deepest thanks to the founders, sponsors, and supporters of Armed Forces Thanksgiving. Your vision and continued commitment are helping to build a stronger, more compassionate West Michigan for those who have served.



Contact Us

616-209-8563

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The West Michigan Veterans Coalition is a Michigan tax-exempt charitable organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3) that serves Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Lake, Kent, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa Counties.

Become a Partner:

Contact Deb Unsel, Program and Outreach Coordinator

Help us to continue helping West Michigan Veterans & their Families. Visit our donation page to make a financial contribution:

[WESTMICHIGANVETERANS.ORG / DONATE /](https://westmichiganveterans.org/donate/)



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West Michigan Veterans Coalition

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