



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

West Michigan Veterans Coalition

WESTMICHIGANVETERANS.ORG



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 over 100,000 Veterans, Service Members, and their Families in the 13 counties of Central West Michigan. 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 2025, I am filled with gratitude for what we have accomplished together at the West Michigan Veterans Coalition (WMVC). This year was one of growth, momentum, and renewed commitment to the veterans, service members, and families we are honored to serve.

Throughout the year, we continued to meet urgent and everyday needs across our 13-county region, providing support that helps stabilize, strengthen, and empower those who have served. From transportation and emergency financial assistance to educational support and specialized programming, our work remains rooted in ensuring that no veteran feels alone in navigating life's challenges.

At the same time, 2025 marked an important step forward in how we show up as an organization. We launched a newly redesigned website, making it easier for veterans and their families to access the resources they need. We also introduced a new giving platform to simplify and expand opportunities for our community to support this mission.

We strengthened our leadership as well, welcoming new board members and Amy Batchelder as our Executive Director. Together, this team is helping guide WMVC into its next chapter with clarity, compassion, and purpose.

Behind every initiative is the power of collaboration. Since our founding in 2009, WMVC has grown into a strategic connector of more than 400 organizations, spanning nonprofit, government, academic, and private sectors, all united by a shared commitment to those who have served. That collaboration continues to be one of our greatest strengths, allowing us to respond quickly and thoughtfully to the evolving needs of our veteran community.

Whether it's helping a veteran get to a critical appointment, easing financial strain during a difficult time, or opening doors to education and opportunity, the impact of this work is deeply human and made possible because of you.

Looking Ahead: Expanding Our Reach, Deepening Our Impact

As we look toward 2026, we are focused on building upon this momentum. We are exploring the launch of an ambassador program to enhance our community engagement, thus helping more veterans and families become aware of the support available to them.

At the same time, we are working to grow our funding so we can serve even more individuals and respond to increasing needs with speed and care. The demand is real, and with your continued support, so is our ability to meet them. We remain committed to strengthening partnerships, increasing awareness, and continuing to evolve in ways that best serve those who have given so much.

With Gratitude

None of this work happens without you, our donors, volunteers, partners, and advocates. Your generosity and belief in this mission allow us to show up, day after day, for those who need it most.

Thank you for standing with us, for lifting up our Veteran community, and for helping us turn gratitude into action.

Together, we are building something meaningful, one connection, one act of service, and one life impacted at a time.

With appreciation and respect,

PAUL RYAN
U.S. Navy, Retired
Chairman of the Board
West Michigan Veterans Coalition

Our Programs



Military Family Assistance Fund (MFAF)

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



Armed Forces Scholarships

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



Catch-a-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.



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.



[Your] support provided me with the necessary resources to meet my immediate financial obligations and give me a fresh start as I work to improve my situation. With your help, I can avoid further financial setbacks and focus on securing a more stable future."

- 2025 MFAF Program Participant

Cover Story

WMVC Board Chairman, Paul Ryan and Board Member, Mike Keast give remarks at Armed Forces Thanksgiving May 16, 2025

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 May, 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.

Learn more at www.armedforcesthx.org



Our Impact in 2025



\$46,900

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

157

Veterans, Service Members, and their Families supported



440

Rides provided to Veterans & their Families to assist with procuring groceries, getting to work, and medical appointments

\$17,000

Dedicated to Women Veterans' Programs



34

Community engagement events where WMVC served as an active participant or key sponsor

8

Armed Forces Scholarship Awards Presented

Support When It Matters Most

At the Cinematic Salute Film Festival, a community partner met a veteran who had received assistance from the West Michigan Veterans Coalition after falling behind on a car payment.

He shared that asking for help was not easy and came with uncertainty about the process. However, after submitting the required information, he quickly received the support he needed at a critical time.

Just as meaningful as the assistance itself was the experience; he described the process as simple and emphasized that he was treated with the utmost respect throughout.

Organizations WMVC Partnered with in 2025

Amphenol Borisch
Armed Forces Thanksgiving
Ashley Home Stores
Bluewater Hayes, Inc.
Disability Advocates of Kent County
GE Aerospace
GVSU Veterans Upward Bound
Holland High School
Holton American Legion Post 397
Kent County Veteran Services

Michigan Army National Guard
Family Programs
Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency
Michigan Veterans Homes
Mid Michigan Community Action Agency
MiWorks!
Montague VFW Post 3256
Montcalm County Fair
Museum Ship USS LST-393 in Muskegon
Muskegon County Veteran Services

North Kent Connect
Ottawa County Veterans Services
Ravenna American Legion Post 297
Rogue River CrossFit
Steelcase
United Veterans Council of Kent County
Vet Center Grand Rapids
Volunteers of America
Worldmaker International
12th Annual Resilience Summit

Thank You 2025 Donors

BUSINESS DONORS

Advantage Benefit
Al McDonald Osmer Post 451
Architectural Metals Inc.
Bradford White Corporation
Grand Rapids Foam Technologies
Hammersmith Equipment Company
Harbor Financial

Hewitt Madigan Amvets Post 126
iMove
Parker Pneumatic Division
Perani's Hockey World
Plascore
Rogue River CrossFit
Thompson Charitable Fund

Timbers Inn Inc.
TRGO Inc (A & B Rentals)
Unsold Management LLC
US Tarp
Van Eck Auto Body
Vos Glass
White Knight Labs

FOUNDATION DONORS

American Online
Giving Foundation, Inc.
Armed Forces Thanksgiving
Bob Woodruff Foundation
Elks Lodge

Goodale Foundation
Hudsonville High School
- Hockey for Heroes
Hudsonville Hockey Boosters
Linda Vos-Graham Giving Fund

PayPal Giving Fund
The Stewart Title
Foundation, Inc.
Thrifty Treasures
United Way
- Heart of West Michigan

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Jennifer Kelly Aldrich
Dustyn Arnold
Ronald Aulbach
Stephanie Beelen
Michelle Blystone
Debra Booth
Allie & Beau Brummel
Ryan Burke
Alisa Cardenas
Monica Carreno Paredes
Emily Conley
Katherine Covey
Kirk Covey
Eric Curtis
Tori Ensing
Tucker Fahlen
Karen Fenton
Alison Flegel
Velvet Fuller
Kendra Gailey
Ken Graham
Nathan Gurley
Kady Gusky
Kurt Hazelwood

Julie Hiler
Anna Howard
Randall Hutson
Whitney Irwin
Marcus Jackson
Lacey Jonassen
Karol Kane
Jennifer Keith
Erin Kemp
Laura Kenrick
Tammy Kirby
Heather Kloian
Martin Kolenko
Naila Kovacevic
Karley Kropa
Mark Kuiper
Elisha LaFramboise
Jen Lanphear
Jacquelin Lemke
Scott McClure
Kathryn McSpaden
Tammy Noordyke
Steven Ott
Katie Pemberton

Aaron Phelps
Bernard Polynice
Ryan Rademacher
Susan Richards
Bob & Faye Richardson Green
Whitney Rodriguez
Lauralee Mathieu Ryan
Audrey Sarantos
Nicole Scales
Karen Schuler
Steven Shafley
Natasha Shively
Sunil Shrestha
Amber Sieffert
Caryn Stetson
Alexandria Sulesky
Nicole Tironi
Beth Truskowski
Kristin Tworek
Lindsay Ulman
Kyle Wilson
Joseph Wiltrakis
Michelle Worthington
Michelle Young Rosencrantz

2025 Board of Directors

Paul J. Ryan, Chair

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

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Managing Partner, Bluewater Hayes

Katherine Dreyer

Director of Marketing
Bluewater Hayes

Deb Unseld

Veteran Spouse
Programs & Outreach Coordinator
West Michigan Veterans Coalition

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Marine Corps Veteran
CEO, Bluewater Hayes

Dana P. Hill

U.S. Army Veteran
Training Specialist
Integrated Packaging Machinery, LLC

Robert Near

U.S. Army Veteran
CEO, Undaunted Consulting, LLC.

Amy Batchelder

U.S. Army Veteran
Executive Director
West Michigan Veterans Coalition

Michael C. Keast

Marine Corps Veteran
Vice President, Commercial
Team Lead
Union Bank

Kevin Sellon

U.S. Army Veteran
ADA Employment Advocate
VDC Counselor
Disability Advocates of Kent County

Caleb Worpel

U.S. Air Force Veteran
Community Outreach Specialist
Ottawa County Veterans Services

WMVC Ambassadors

We are grateful for our WMVC Ambassadors who generously give their time and energy to advance our mission and strengthen our community. Their consistent support and trusted insight help extend our reach and deepen our impact for Veterans and their families.

Linda Vos-Graham

Carol Helsel

Steven Lipnicki

Bill Wonderlin

Veteran Testimonials

**Mike Y.**

*Armed Forces Dependent
Scholarship Recipient*

"The WMVC Armed Forces Dependent Scholarship is important to me because it helps reduce the financial challenges of completing my degree in Geology. As I work toward graduating in the summer of 2027, this support allows me to focus fully on my coursework without the added stress of financial uncertainty."

Stability During Transition

The West Michigan Veterans Coalition provided critical support to a National Guard soldier facing financial hardship after the loss of his civilian job. While awaiting the completion of a background check for new employment and experiencing delays in military pay, he fell behind on essential expenses.

With a referral from a National Guard Family Readiness Specialist, WMVC stepped in to assist with a utility bill and a vehicle payment, helping stabilize his situation during a period of uncertainty.

Shortly after, the soldier successfully completed his background check and received a new job offer, allowing him to move forward with renewed stability.

She's a Veteran Outdoors

In 2025, the West Michigan Veterans Coalition was proud to support She's a Veteran Outdoors, a program through Zero Day dedicated to empowering women veterans through connection, nature, and shared experience.

This initiative goes beyond a single event; it is part of a larger movement to help women embrace their identity as veterans, while also reshaping public perception of what a veteran looks like. Through intentional outreach and thoughtfully designed programming, *She's a Veteran Outdoors* creates a welcoming environment where women can connect with one another, access valuable resources, and build a strong sense of community.

At the heart of the program are outdoor experiences that provide a safe and supportive space for women veterans to step away from daily stressors and reconnect with nature, with others, and with themselves. Whether walking trails, gathering around a campfire, or simply sharing conversations, participants find moments of both joy and healing.

With the Coalition's support, participants who may not have otherwise been able to attend due to financial barriers were equipped with the tools, resources, and support needed to fully participate and enjoy the experience. This commitment ensures that access to healing, connection, and community is not limited by circumstance.

As shared in a 2025 letter from program leadership, these experiences foster connection during both the "good seasons" and the more challenging ones—reminding participants that they do not have to navigate life alone.

Research continues to affirm what these gatherings demonstrate in real time: time spent outdoors can reduce stress, improve emotional well-being, and strengthen resilience. By supporting this program, WMVC helps bring these benefits directly to women veterans across West Michigan.

The impact is both immediate and lasting, creating spaces where women veterans feel seen, supported, and empowered to heal, connect, and thrive.



Photo Courtesy of She's A Veteran Outdoors - Tiffany Carr

She's a Veteran Outdoors

8/18/2025

West Michigan Veterans Coalition
Grand Rapids, Mi 49503

Dear Friends of the West Michigan Veterans Coalition,

On behalf of *She's A Veteran Outdoors*, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your generous support. Your commitment has allowed us to journey many miles together—on the trails, at camp, and even in the simple yet powerful space of our group chats.

Being able to meet, walk beside, and truly get to know these women has been a gift. Together, we have shared laughter in the good seasons, comfort in the difficult ones, and strength in the really hard ones. Your support makes these moments possible, reminding us that healing doesn't have to happen alone.

As Florence Williams, author of *The Nature Fix*, reminds us: "Nature is not only nice to have, it's a have-to-have for physical health and cognitive function." In fact, research has shown that women who regularly spend time outdoors report significantly reduced stress, improved emotional regulation, and greater resilience in navigating life's challenges.

Because of your partnership, we can bring that healing power of nature directly to the women veterans throughout West Michigan.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for walking alongside us. Your generosity continues to create safe spaces where women veterans can heal, connect, and thrive.

With gratitude,

Tiffany Carr, C.T.R.S.

Tiffany Carr, C.T.R.S.
She's A Veteran Outdoors at Zero Day, Inc.



Photos courtesy of
She's A Veteran Outdoors - Tiffany Carr

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Contact Us

231-259-8642

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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.

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/)



To Become a Partner, Contact:



AMY BATCHELDER

Executive Director
West Michigan Veterans Coalition

Phone: 231-259-8642 Email: amy.batchelder@westmichiganveterans.org