

VA



• Phoenix • Tucson • Prescott
• Phoenix Regional Office

STAKEHOLDERS REPORT

March 2026



Michael Welsh, MS, RD

Deputy Medical Center Director
VA Phoenix Arizona Health Care



John B. Kettelle, MD

Interim Medical Center Director
VA Southern Arizona Health Care



Steve Sample, MS, FACHE, CHC

Medical Center Director
VA Northern Arizona Health Care

Elijah Ditter sworn in as Phoenix VA Medical Center Director

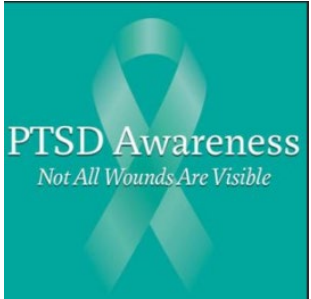


Elijah J. Ditter, MHA, was sworn in as Medical Center Director for the Phoenix VA Health Care System Feb. 23.

Mr. Ditter's previous experience at PVAHCS includes positions such as Assistant Director, Executive Assistant to the Director, and various leadership roles in Quality Management.

Additionally, his background with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and his Fellowship in hospital administration show his broad expertise in healthcare management.





Large-scale traumatic events such as wars, terrorism, mass violence, or natural disasters can exacerbate symptoms of PTSD. Veterans may have personal connections to the people or places impacted, intensifying their feelings. These events can also serve as powerful reminders of their own experiences.

Below are some resources available to support Veterans who may be affected by these current events.

Contact the VA PTSD Program (VHAPHOPCT_Clinic@va.gov) with any questions or for consultation on referrals. Additionally, the National Center for PTSD consultation team is available to provide expert opinions and support.

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/consult/index.asp>

Addressing Veterans' Reactions to Large-Scale Traumatic Events

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/disaster_events/for_employers/reactions_large_scale.asp

Tips for Veterans Coping With Large-Scale Traumatic Events

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/disaster_events/for_everyone/large_scale_traumatic_events.asp

Provider Guide to Addressing Veterans' Reactions to Large-Scale Traumatic Events

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/disaster_events/for_providers/pro_large_scale_traumatic_events.asp





The Phoenix VA Health Care System proudly participated in our annual **Go Red for Women photo**, Feb. 6.

The photo was an opportunity for VA staff to raise awareness of heart disease – the #1 leading cause of death among women in the United States.

Together, we stand committed to education, prevention, and advancing women's heart health.





As part of the Phoenix VA Go Red for Women events, the Women's Health Program hosted a **Heart Health Month** event at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center, Feb. 24.





The Phoenix VA celebrated a milestone of providing excellent care to Veterans with **1,000 surgeries performed with the DaVinci robot.**

The celebration included an interactive display where staff and Veterans were able to get a hand-on experience.



The Phoenix VA held events all week long to celebrate and recognize our amazing patients during **National Salute to Veteran Patient Week**. Feb. 9-13.

Events included cakes to recognize each service, music by our Music Therapists and by guest Apache Spirit who played during a pizza party on the Main Campus Canteen Patio.



Maj. Fannie Griffin-McClendon (Ret.), the last surviving member of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion visited the Phoenix VA Community Living Center to see her plaque, Feb. 19.

During World War II, the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion—an all-Black unit of the Women’s Army Corps—was tasked with clearing a backlog of millions of pieces of mail to increase morale. What was expected to take six months, they did in just three.





Phoenix VA focused on continuing to foster a culture of trust and improve on relationship building with local Veterans, families, caregivers, and community agencies at the **San Carlos Apache Tribe Veterans Stand Down**, Feb. 14.

Over 50 Veterans and their families received services, such as eligibility and enrollment, toxic exposure screening, and received education on housing resources, virtual care services, health promotion disease prevention, suicide prevention awareness, and much more. A VA Vet Center mental health counselor (Native American) also partnered and provided in-person counseling, as needed.





While attending the **Fishers of Men for Veterans Outreach – Overgaard**, on Feb. 19, the Office of the Deputy Medical Center Director learned of rural Veterans' needs and challenges, as well as gained an understanding of local case management.

Phoenix VA provided 1:1 services, such as HEC toll-free and VBA virtual appointment scheduling, promoted Payson and Show Low VA Clinic services, exercised resource sharing, and more.

Outreach opportunities with Fishers of Men Veterans organization is ongoing.





Phoenix VA attended the **Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Annual Veterans Open House**, which was a 2-hour event on Feb. 20, that helped outreach teams to learn of Veterans' challenges, listen to their stories, and work to address their needs.

Approximately 49 Veterans were in attendance and received services from Phoenix VA staff from Eligibility and Enrollment, Women Veterans program, Suicide Prevention, and Social Work.



Phoenix VA staff supported and participated in the outreach segment of the **81st Anniversary Iwo Jima Flag Raising**, Feb 21, along with the Deputy Director who provided VIP remarks as well as exercised engagement time with the community at the 81st Anniversary Iwo Jima Flag Raising event.

The annual gathering commemorated the Feb. 23, 1945, flag-raising on Iwo Jima and honors Ira Hayes, a Marine and Gila River member, along with all Veterans.



The outreach aspired to **identify and engage with underserved Veterans and families**, provide **enrollment and eligibility services**, **promote suicide prevention awareness** among American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans, **further virtual health technologies and devices**, and continued to strengthen a culture of trust.



Fisher House Updates





COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

STROLLIN' THROUGH THE COLON

March 3, 8 am - Noon
Phoenix VA Medical Center

March 10, 8 am - Noon
Southeast VA Clinic

March 24, 8 - Noon
32nd Street VA Clinic



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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Phoenix VA Health Care System

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March 10

When: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., Thursday

Where: VFW Post 9400, 804 E Purdue Ave, Phoenix, AZ

April 14

When: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., Thursday

Where: Phoenix 32nd Street VA Clinic

More Info: Agenda will be distributed prior to each meeting. You are welcome to send questions, comments, suggestions, and discussion topics to prphoenix@va.gov at any time prior to the next meeting.

Phoenix VA Healthcare System



VSO MIXER

Food and drinks will be provided!

Second Tuesday of the month
1-2 p.m.

Phoenix VA 32nd Street Outpatient Clinic and Teams ([Click Here](#))

Or call in:
+1 205-235-3524
Conference ID: 746 788 251#

- The event is open to current VSO's and those interested in partnering with Phoenix VA.
- An agenda will be distributed one week prior to each meeting. You are welcome to send questions, comments, suggestions, and discussion topics to prphoenix@va.gov at any time throughout the month. We look forward to your continued partnership and participation.

To RSVP, please email:
prphoenix@va.gov



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Women Veterans Town Hall

JOIN THE PHOENIX VA
WOMEN VETERANS' TELE-TOWN HALL

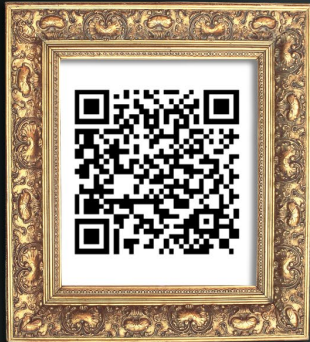
Thursday, March 12th
4:30 - 5:30 PM

TOPIC: HEALTHY AGING

With presentations from Psychology, Nutrition, Recreation Therapy, and Community Care

Three ways to join

1. Streaming online: <https://access.live/PHXVAWomenVets>
2. Accept the VA phone call to automatically join
3. Dial in by calling 855-962-1525



Women Veterans Tele-Town Hall

When: 4:30 p.m., Thursday, March 12

Where: Online or by phone call

More Info: Presentations from Psychology, Nutrition, Recreation Therapy, and Community Care

Join: Streaming on <https://access.live/PHXVAWomenVets> or by calling 855-962-1525





Maricopa County Veteran StandDown

March 12, 2026 | 8:00am - 3:00pm

March 13, 2026 | 8:00am - 3:00pm

Arizona State Fairgrounds

(1862 W. McDowell Road, Phoenix, AZ 85007)



SCAN TO LEARN MORE!

Open to all veterans in need of the following complimentary support and resources:

- Court/Legal Services
- Employment Support
- MVD Services
- Housing Assistance
- VA Benefits
- Disability Claims
- Social Security
- Education Services
- Vision/Medical Support
- Mental Health/PTSD Support
- Department of Economic Security
- VA Healthcare
- Showers/Hygiene Assistance
- Pet Care/Vaccinations
- and so much more!

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Because of you,
life doesn't stop.

**BLOOD
DRIVE**

Phoenix VA Health Care System Blood Drive

DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026
TIME: 7:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Ambulatory Care Basement
650 E. Indian School Rd. ~ Phoenix, AZ

To reserve your donation time, visit vitalant.org (Enter Code: P1396) or scan the QR Code. For questions, please contact Cynthia Gonzalez-Teninty at cynthia.gonzalez-teninty@va.gov or Tiffany Clemons at tiffany.clemons@va.gov



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National NUTRITION MONTH

March 2026

Education Events

March 18, 10-2 pm
@ 32nd Street Clinic

March 23, 1:30-3:30 pm
Thunderbird Clinic

March 25, 10-2 pm
Carl T. Hayden Medical Center
@ ACC main entrance

March 26, 8-11 am
Southeast Clinic

Discover the Power of Nutrition



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Questions?

Get Connected!

On the Web



www.phoenix.va.gov

On Social Media



linktr.ee/prphoenix



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I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for your trust, support and partnership during my time as the Interim Director at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS). The past 240 days have been filled with meaningful milestones and memorable moments, that I will cherish.

In accordance with VA policy, my detail as Interim Director ended on Thursday, February 26th. Starting Friday, February 27th, Dr. John B. Kettelle will be detailed as the Interim SAVAHCS Director. He brings a proven record of leadership and dedication to our mission, and I am confident he will continue to do so during this detail.

Dr. Kettelle is a U.S. Navy Veteran. He received his MD from the University of California Davis, School of Medicine and completed his residency in General Surgery at San Joaquin General Hospital in Stockton, CA. He began his VA career in August 2015, became the SAVAHCS Chief of Surgical Services in May 2017, and has served as the SAVAHCS Chief of Staff since August 2019.

During this time, Dr. Curtis Cornelius will also serve as Acting Chief of Staff. I will transition back to my role as the SAVAHCS Associate Director and Ms. Jenny Wasielewski will return to her role as the SAVAHCS Assistant Director on March 23rd. As I transition back into the Associate Director role, I look forward to continuing to strengthen our partnerships to better serve Veterans.



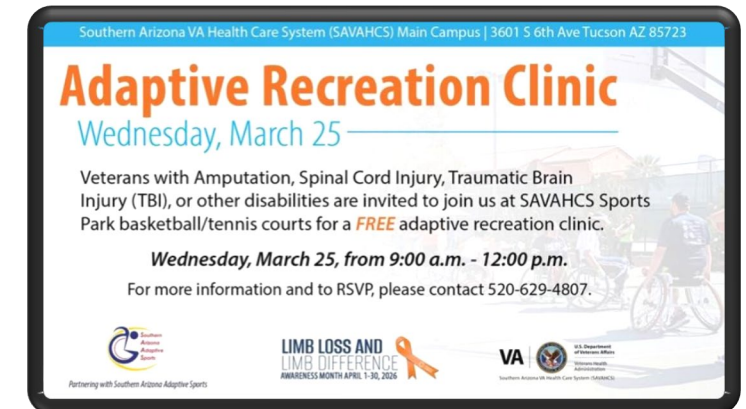
John B. Kettelle, MD
Interim Medical Center Director



Adaptive Recreation Clinic

Join us on Wednesday, March 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

This free clinic is designed to introduce Veterans to adaptive sports that promote health, confidence, and community. Veterans living with amputation, spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury (TBI), or other disabilities are invited to participate and discover new ways to stay active and engaged. For more information and to RSVP, please contact (520) 629-4807.



SAVAHCS Tucson Veteran Engagement and Resource Fair

Join us on Friday, March 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for our Tucson Veteran Engagement and Resource Fair at El Pueblo Activity Center, located at 101 W. Irvington Road, Tucson, AZ 85714. VA and community resources will be available, offering valuable information and support for Veterans, their families, and caregivers. For more information, please contact our Public Affairs Office at pao.savahcs@va.gov. We look forward to seeing you there!



Free Tax Preparation for Veterans

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program from United Way of Tucson is teaming up with SAVAHCS to offer FREE in-person tax preparation for Veterans.

- Tuesdays & Fridays, Feb. 24 – Apr. 3
- 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Tucson VA Medical Center, Building 13
- By appointment only – Scan the QR code to schedule.

For more details on VITA services:

- vita@unitedwaytucson.org
- unitedwaytucson.org/vita



Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System (SAVAHCS)

Free Tax Preparation FOR VETERANS!

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program of United Way of Tucson is collaborating with SAVAHCS to provide FREE in-person tax preparation services for Veterans **by appointment only**.

Schedule your appointment today by scanning the QR code.

Tuesdays & Fridays
February 24 - April 3
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Tucson VA, Building 13
3601 S. 6th Ave, Tucson AZ
*Parking available in Lots U & W.

For more information on VITA Tax services,
email: vita@unitedwaytucson.org or visit: unitedwaytucson.org/vita

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Do not pay for VA or Community Care Appointments up front.

Protect yourself from a recent scam targeting Veterans.

A Veteran recently received a fake letter claiming he had a VA appointment and was asked to pay for the visit.

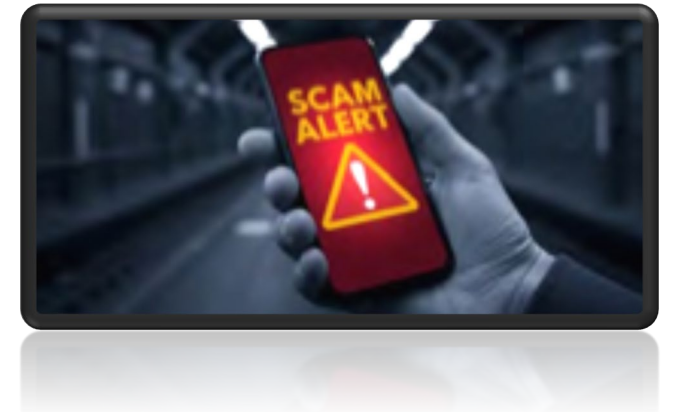
- VA later confirmed he was not enrolled in VA health care, and no appointment had been scheduled.
- The letter and payment request were fraudulent.

Remember:

- ❑ Veterans should never pay for any VA or Community Care appointment before or at the time of the appointment.
- ❑ VA does not charge upfront fees for appointments.
- ❑ VA does not send payment requests by email, text message, or phone.
- ❑ Community Care appointments are authorized by VA and are free to Veterans except standard VA co-pays when applicable.

If you receive a suspicious letter, call, or message:

- ❑ Do not send money or share personal financial information.
- ❑ Contact your local VA medical center directly to verify any appointment.
- ❑ Report suspicious activity to the Integrity and Compliance Helpline at (866) 842-4357 or VHAOICHelpline@va.gov, VSAFE at 1-833-388-7233 or the [VA OIG](https://www.va.gov) Hotline at 1-800-488-8244.



VA Secure Messaging

Skip the phone lines and connect with your care team directly using VA Secure Messaging! With just a few clicks from your My HealtheVet account, you can send non-urgent questions, request prescription renewals, and manage appointments anytime.

It's fast, convenient, and puts your health at your fingertips. Log in today at www.va.gov and take charge of your care!

If you or the Veterans you serve have questions, please call the SAVAHCS Virtual Health Resource Center at (520) 629-1713 or send an email to TucsonVHRC@va.gov.

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)

VA Secure Messaging

Your Direct Link to Your Care Team



Skip the phone lines—message your VA provider anytime!

VA Secure Messaging lets you send non-urgent questions, request prescription renewals, and manage appointments—all from your My HealtheVet account.

✓ Safe ✓ Convenient ✓ Free

Log in today: www.va.gov

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Make a Difference as a Volunteer Driver or a Volunteer Visitors

We are seeking volunteer drivers around Sierra Vista and Yuma areas to help transport Veterans to their medical appointments in Tucson. We are also seeking volunteers to serve as Volunteer Visitors for homebound and isolated Veterans. These volunteers offer one-on-one social interaction, engaging in activities such as conversations, art projects, games, walks, and gardening. No hands-on care is required, and visits can also provide a break for caregivers.

For details on how to become a volunteer driver or a volunteer visitor, contact the SAVAHCS Center for Development and Civic Engagement Office at (520) 629-1822 or email TucsonCDCE@va.gov.



Expand and Renovate Clinics Bldg. 80 The General Contractor has built the base on the second floor near the elevator area to support the steel framework for the new addition. Station Level Projects will finish the elevator area by installing the floor and painting the walls. The East entrance of Building 80 is closed. This closure is projected to remain until the upper floor is sealed and the sidewalk is reinstalled sometime in late Spring.

Please use the West entrance near the Emergency Department for patient access to the Cholla, Ocotillo, and Saguaro Clinics. We know this is inconvenient, but it's necessary for everyone's safety during the construction.

Emergency Department (ED) Renovations and Expansion: The General Contractor completed the floor slab which will eventually add another 8,000 square feet to the Existing ED. They are now working on installing the outer walls, interior partitions, and above ceiling utilities.





We celebrated [National Salute to Veteran Patients Week](#) from February 8–14 with a variety of uplifting activities, including Super Bowl Parties in our inpatient wards, Coffee & Cakes for our Veterans, a cheerful visit from [Dusty of the Tucson Roadrunners](#), and engaging events like a Spin Wheel, Prize Table, and Pet Therapy.

Community partners joined us to spend meaningful time with our Veterans, and [Sabino High School's Purple Star Club](#) delivered heartfelt [Valentine cards](#). The week wrapped up with a well-enjoyed Ice Cream Social, making it a memorable celebration honoring our Veterans.



Our outreach team was honored to attend the [81st Anniversary of the Iwo Jima Flag Raising Military Parade](#) in Sacaton, AZ! During this incredible event, we provided valuable information and resources on VA healthcare to over **70 Veterans**. We were thrilled to witness a special guest appearance by Navajo Code Talker Thomas H. Begay, adding a profound touch to the day's activities.





A massive thank you to our friends at [Christ Presbyterian Church](#)! Their consistent dedication to the Patriot Pantry has been a total game-changer for our Veterans. By keeping our shelves stocked, they aren't just donating food—they're showing our local heroes that their community truly has their back. We are so incredibly grateful for your heart for service.



The amazing [AMVETS Post 770 Riders](#) generously presented a donation to our hospice and palliative care program at SAVAHCs. Our 17-bed unit provides 24/7 care in a cozy, home-like environment. Each Veteran enjoys personal comforts like a refrigerator, television, bedside table, and dresser, with the encouragement to personalize their space with items from home.



For the second year in a row, [Walmart](#) has generously donated snacks and decorations to make our Super Bowl festivities extra special for the Veterans at 1 West, Building 95, Community Living Center, and Southwestern Blind & Rehab Center! Sabrina Lugo, our Assistant CDCE Chief, shared, "Veterans will be able to enjoy the Super Bowl festivities thanks to this wonderful contribution from Walmart. A huge thank you to the amazing Walmart stores that made this possible."



Questions

Follow us on social media for the latest updates and to stay informed

- ❑ Website: va.gov/southern-arizona-health-care
- ❑ Facebook: facebook.com/VATucson
- ❑ Instagram instagram.com/vatucson
- ❑ X/Twitter: x.com/TucsonVA
- ❑ YouTube: [Subscribe now](#) and join the SAVAHCS community!



Jay W. Routson, MD
Acting Deputy Chief of Staff

Dr. Routson spent time in training at the Lincoln, Omaha and San Antonio VA hospitals and clinics. Since residency, he has worked in traditional internal medicine private practice, as a residency teaching attending, emergency physician, hospitalist, intensivist, medical director, and department chair.

Dr. Routson first joined Northern Arizona VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS) in 2011 and cumulatively has over 13 years' experience at NAVAHCS. He appreciates the opportunity to serve as interim DCOS.

Salute Week 2026

Prescott, Feb. 8-14



For National Salute to Veteran Patients week, our CDCE service line and local VSOs treated our inpatients with small gifts of gratitude each day, such as desserts, crossword puzzle books, and fun activities.

VISN Network Director Visit

Prescott, Feb. 12



Our Interim VISN 22 Network Director, Bryan Arnette, visited our medical center to talk with leadership and staff about our accomplishments and any challenges we could use his support with to overcome. While here, he recognized several of our employees for their hard work and dedication.



Lake Havasu VFW & Lake Havasu American Legion

Lake Havasu, Feb. 10-11



Combined Totals

- 112 attendees
- 9 Enrollments/Registrations
- 6 Veteran VA Healthcare ID
- 10 Mobile Medical Appts.

Quartzsite VFW & Parker Stand Down

Quartzsite/Parker, Feb. 19-20



Combined Totals

- 110 Veterans attended
- 5 Enrollments/Registrations
- 14 Veteran VA Healthcare ID
- 10 Mobile Medical Appts.



Navajo Women Warriors Day of Recognition

Flagstaff, March 19



- **When:** 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Thursday, March 19
- **Where:** Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, [22181 Resort Blvd., Flagstaff, AZ](#)
- **More Info:** Patricia Burnside at (623) 206-7673 or p.burnside@navajo-nsn.gov

Verde Valley Stand Down

Camp Verde, March 27



- **When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Aug. March 6
- **Where:** Optimum Community Center, [2380 Optimum Way, Bullhead City, AZ](#)
- **More Info:** events@javg.org

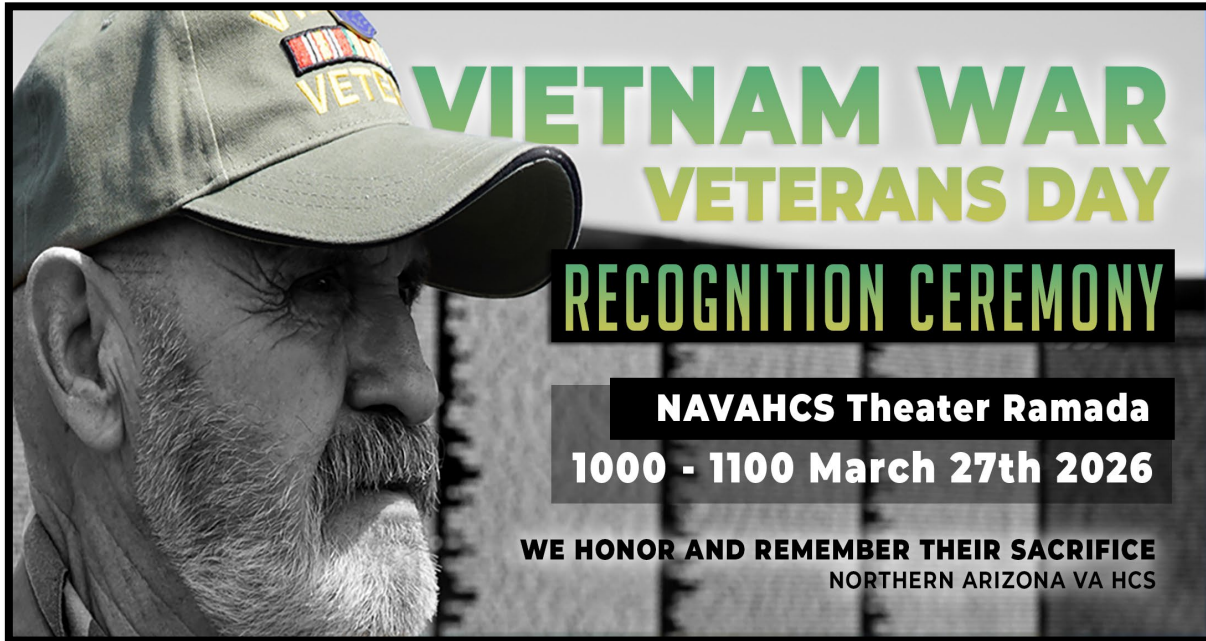
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Vietnam War Veterans Day Recognition Ceremony

Prescott, March 27



Please join us in honoring our Vietnam Veterans during our annual Vietnam War Veterans Day recognition ceremony.

This is an opportunity to solemnly recognize those who served and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

The ceremony will include a presentation of colors and several guest speakers.

- **When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, March 27
- **Where:** Bob Stump VA Medical Center, [500 Highway 89 N, Prescott](#)
- **Contact:** (928) 776-6013





Veteran Services Event

Presented By NAVAHCS and VFW Post 2357

Date: March 10th 9 am till 3 pm

Location: 45190 Hwy 72, Bouse, AZ
(33.9119, -113.9901)

- Learn about Veteran programs and services.
- Speak with Dept. of VA staff at event.
- Enroll for Veteran benefits.
- Medical appointment/services for eligible veterans.

POC: Joshua Wear, RHC 928-458-8713 / Andrew Taylor, RHC 928-237-8310

- **Bouse VFW Post 2357** – Tue, March 10
 - [Details](#)
- **Parker RCBH** – Wed, March 11
 - [Details](#)
- **Parker Indian Health Center** – Thu, March 12
 - [Details](#)
- **Peach Springs Health Center** – Thu, March 26
 - [Details](#)
- **Kingman VFW Post 10386** – Fri, March 27
 - [Details](#)

Questions?

Visit our website or follow us on social media for the latest updates and to stay informed

- Website: <https://www.va.gov/northern-arizona-health-care/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VAPrescott>
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/va_prescott/?ig

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