

June 23, 2020

Homeless Veterans

America owes all of its veterans a debt of gratitude that we could never repay. That statement while simple is true. We work every day to repay that debt from small gestures such as thanking veterans for their service to larger, grander, gestures such as making donations to veterans homes, local VA's and other groups and facilities that help our veterans.

If we stop and think of all of the veterans that we help, what one group is unfortunately most apt to be missed? Our homeless veterans. Every year the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, estimates the number of homeless Americans, including homeless veterans. In January of 2018 it was estimated that 37,878 veterans were homeless, in January 2019 that number dropped to 37,085, the 2020 numbers have not been released yet. In the last decade the estimated number of homeless veterans has dropped by half and it is possible to get all veterans off the street in the future.

Every state is taking steps to help our homeless and our homeless veterans, but there is so much more to be done. Many states have groups whose sole purpose is to help homeless veterans. Two of the largest issues facing America's homeless veterans is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (for more on PTSD see the first link below, from the Mayo Clinic) and alcohol/substance abuse. While both issues may not be connected, too often someone who suffers from PTSD will self-medicate, leading to alcohol/substance dependency. Groups who help our homeless veterans become helpful members of society help enroll veterans into the VA so they can get the medical help that they need, offer shelter, food, clothing and many times someone to talk to with similar experiences. A list of just some of the groups that help our homeless veterans can be found below (see the second link below) as well as the organizations who support those groups (also the second link below).

Many of the groups that help homeless veterans get off the streets have very strict rules against the use of alcohol and non-prescription drugs and because of these rules have lost all federal funding. In New Hampshire one such group is the Liberty House (see the third link below) which means they have to operate off private donations making things even more difficult for them.

Many states and groups have been building tiny homes for homeless veterans. These small homes are relatively cheap, easy to build and gives the veterans a place to live and call their own, in the process gives them a sense of responsibility (see the fourth link to watch a video on just one of these communities).

For God and Country,
Phillip A Cook,
VA&R Commission Member

[https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967#:~:text=Post%2Dtraumatic%20stress%20disorder%20\(PTSD\)%20is%20a%20mental%20health,uncontrollable%20thoughts%20about%20the%20event.](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967#:~:text=Post%2Dtraumatic%20stress%20disorder%20(PTSD)%20is%20a%20mental%20health,uncontrollable%20thoughts%20about%20the%20event.)

<https://www.va.gov/homeless/nonvaresources.asp#three>

<https://libertyhousenh.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfk3F28u7GQ>