



## 2013



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***“With almost 2.0 million veterans living in California, a quarter of these veterans live in Los Angeles County. The sacrifice of these heroes generates pride and appreciation from all of us.”***

In 2013, the Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs helped veterans and families obtain federal, state, county benefits and services. We assisted with college fee tuition waivers, helped indigent veterans obtain employment and housing, referred families in need of mental health services, participated in community programs, supported our military with transitional programs, and facilitated reintegrating families back to their communities.

We filed 6,000 claims resulting in \$16.0 compensation awards to our eligible veterans. The Department received \$375,000 from the County Department of Mental Health to administer the Veteran Systems Navigator Program resulting in uninterrupted services to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health conditions.

While these numbers are impressive, they do not tell the full story of how we impact the lives of the veterans we serve. Let me share with you one story of a veteran who found himself living on the streets of Los Angeles and how we helped him. Johnny served in the Army from 1995 to 2003. He came to Los Angeles to bury his infant daughter who died from a misdiagnosed case of pneumonia. The Army was his passion, but with the loss of his child came depression and a cycle of self-medication. Before long, Johnny found himself discharged dishonorably from the Army. His family was broken apart. His wife left him. Johnny was living on the streets while caring for his 18 month old twins. But the worst was yet to come.

He found himself alone and in the LA County Jail. Tragically, his wife gained custody of his children and moved them out of state.

Upon release from jail, Johnny decided to try and turn his life around. He came to our department and worked closely with one of our highly experienced veteran counselors. We were successful in upgrading his discharge which meant we could help him obtain veterans educational, housing and employment benefits. He worked as a paid student worker in our department while studying for his undergraduate degree using his G.I. Bill. At the same time, he became certified as a Veteran Service Officer — the first student worker ever to achieve this distinction.

Today, Johnny works for a large non-profit organization using his experience and training to connect other veterans to much needed services.

His success story is one of many stories we hear on a daily basis. Helping our veterans and linking them to services enriches the quality of their lives, strengthens our communities, and enhances our County image.

Our award winning Mental Health Navigators program continues to link combat veterans and their families suffering from post-traumatic stress or other mental health conditions to County services. We've served more than 5,000 veterans through our Mental Health Navigator program since 2009.

The highlight this year was the reopening and rededication of the newly renovated and restored Bob Hope Patriotic Hall in November. The building underwent extensive renovation, modernizing the facility while retaining its historic charm. We look forward to creating a full service center that focuses solely on supporting Military veterans and their families.

With almost 2.0 million veterans living in California, a quarter of these veterans live in Los Angeles County. The sacrifice of these heroes generates pride and appreciation from all of us. We are grateful for their service and proud to be of service to them.