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January marks a season of renewal and reflection, offering a chance to set new goals while revisiting past ones. As we step into 2025, it's the perfect time to focus on growth, resilience, and making this year count. This month, we're highlighting events tailored to employment opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families, as well as resources and trainings to support their well-being. Be sure to explore the "Community Events" section below for more details on what's happening and how you can get involved!



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

## Community Events

- ✓ Wed., January 15, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. : Virtual Hiring Fair: Logistics, Skilled Trades, and Transportation [Register](#)
- ✓ Thurs., January 16, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. : Human Psychology Partnered with the Restorative Power of Nature [Register](#)
- ✓ Thurs., January 16, 5 p.m. : Veterans Connect Networking: Financial Readiness [Register](#)
- ✓ Wed., January 22 : VeteranWorks Career Connect Virtual Job Networking Event [Register](#)
- ✓ Thurs., January 23, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. : Boots to Business (Entrepreneurship) [Register](#)
- ✓ Thurs., January 23, 12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. : Flourishing Through Life Transitions: Military to Civilian [Register](#)
- ✓ Wed., January 29, 11:30 a.m. : AMAFCEA Belvoir January 2025 Luncheon [Register](#)
- ✓ Thurs., January 30, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. : 2025 HIRE VETS NOW - Fort Belvoir Spring [Register](#)

## Special Observances & Resources

- ✓ **January 1:** National Blood Donor Month
- ✓ **January 1:** Poverty Awareness Month
- ✓ **January 20:** Dr. Martin Luther King Day
- ✓ **January 27:** International Holocaust Remembrance Day



[SMVF WEBSITE & RESOURCES](#)

# Join the Mission: Providing Free Counseling Through 'Give an Hour'

Mental health is a critical aspect of overall well-being, especially for our service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF), who often face unique challenges stemming from their military service. Many veterans and their families grapple with issues such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, and the long-term effects of trauma. Addressing these needs requires a collaborative effort from all of us as clinicians, peers, and community members.

One meaningful way to make a difference is by volunteering with 'Give an Hour', a nonprofit organization that connects licensed mental health professionals & trained peers with veterans, service members, & their families in need of free, confidential counseling. By dedicating just an hour of your time each week, you can help provide much-needed support & be part of the healing journey for those who have served.

For more information about how to volunteer, visit: [Give An Hour](#)



## The Healing Power of Emotional Support Animals For Veterans

In addition to the incredible mental health resources available, emotional support animals (ESAs) have proven to be life-changing companions for many veterans. These animals provide not only comfort & unconditional love but also help reduce symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, & depression, offering a sense of security and purpose. Here are several organizations that provide free or low-cost emotional support animals (ESAs) and service dogs for veterans:

- 1** **Pets for Vets - Matches rescue animals with veterans to provide companionship and emotional support.** [Pets for Vets](#)
- 2** **K9s For Warriors - Provides trained service dogs to post-9/11 veterans living with PTSD, traumatic brain injury, or military sexual trauma.** [K9s for Warriors](#)
- 3** **America's VetDogs - Offers service dogs to veterans with disabilities, including PTSD and vision or hearing impairments.** [VETDOGS](#)
- 4** **Semper K9 Assistance Dogs- Custom-trains service dogs for veterans, focusing on dogs rescued from shelters.** [Semper K9 Assistance Dogs](#)

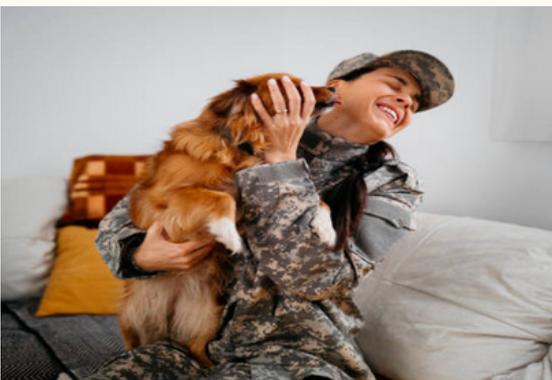
- 5** Paws for Purple Hearts- Provides veterans with service dogs trained in therapeutic interventions and emotional support. [Paws for Purple Hearts](#)
- 6** Hero Dogs - Trains and places service dogs with veterans free of charge, offering continued support and training as needed. [HERO DOGS](#)
- 7** Companions for Heroes - Pairs veterans with rescue animals trained for emotional support, helping both the veteran and the animal find a new purpose. [Companions for Heroes](#)
- 8** Pups 4 Patriots through American Human Society [Pups4Patriots - American Humane Society](#)



**Photo attribution**

## Understanding Insurance Options for Emotional Support Animals and Service Dogs

Beyond the emotional benefits provided by support animals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes the practical & therapeutic value of service dogs for veterans with disabilities.



While emotional support animals are not covered, the VA provides financial assistance for service dogs that are specifically trained to aid veterans with physical or mental health conditions, such as PTSD or mobility challenges. This coverage includes essential veterinary care, specialized equipment like harnesses, & other services required to ensure the dog can perform its tasks effectively. By offering this support, the VA helps to ease the financial burden associated with owning a service animal, allowing veterans to focus on their recovery and well-being.

This initiative highlights the VA's understanding of how integral service animals can be to a veteran's care plan. These animals often play a critical role in fostering independence & emotional stability for their handlers. To qualify, veterans must meet specific eligibility requirements & demonstrate a documented need as part of their treatment. By providing resources for service dogs, the VA ensures that veterans can access this valuable support system, empowering them to lead more fulfilling and balanced lives.

**For more information about the VA's service dog program and eligibility requirements, visit the official Department of Veterans Affairs website:**

## **Service Dog Veterinary Health Benefit**

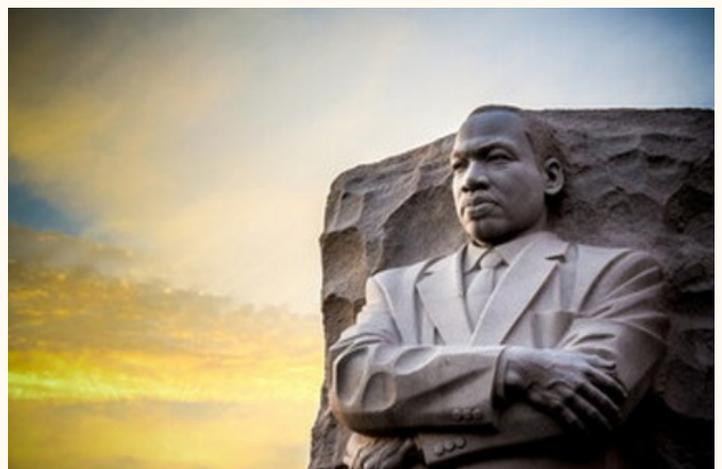
# Honoring Service, Compassion, and Justice: A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As we reflect on the incredible bond between veterans & their emotional support animals, we're reminded of the values of service, compassion, and connection that lie at the heart of healing and community. These principles resonate deeply with the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a leader who dedicated his life to advocating for justice, equality, and unity. Dr. King's work brought solace and inspiration to countless individuals striving for a better future.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a transformative leader, civil rights activist, & advocate for equality, justice, and peace. His commitment to nonviolence and service to humanity inspired millions, including those in the armed forces, as he called for unity and justice for all Americans. Dr. King's advocacy extended to issues deeply relevant to the military community, including his opposition to the Vietnam War, where he highlighted the disproportionate impact on marginalized communities. His belief in the dignity of every individual and his call for fairness, both in society and in the military, continue to resonate.

This January, we honor Dr. King's enduring message of service to others and standing up for what is right. His vision of a just and equitable society calls us to reflect on how we can contribute to positive change in our own communities, including the veteran population. Whether through volunteering, advocating for mental health resources, or simply spreading kindness, we can each play a part in carrying forward the ideals Dr. King lived by. As we honor his legacy, we reflect on how his values align with the sacrifices and dedication of our service members, veterans, and their families.





This year, the City of Alexandria is hosting a variety of free events to honor Dr. King’s memory through community services, education, and celebration. From commemorative programs to museum visits and volunteer opportunities, these events provide meaningful ways to engage with Dr. King’s values of equality, justice, and service. Explore the events below to find opportunities to participate and pay tribute to his enduring legacy.

### **52nd Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Program**

On Wednesday, January 15, join the City of Alexandria and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Planning Committee for a community celebration themed “Mission Possible: Protecting Freedom, Justice & Democracy.” The event includes a reception with light appetizers and drinks from 5:30 p.m. to 6:20 p.m., followed by the program from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. While the event is free, registration is encouraged.

**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER**

### **Freedom House Museum Visit for MLK Weekend**

Freedom House Museum Visit for MLK Weekend is organized by Burke United Methodist Church. Held on Saturday, January 18, 10:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., this event offers a racial history education experience in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Participants will visit the Freedom House Museum in Alexandria. The event is free, but registration is required.

**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER**

### **Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service**

Hosted at Shiloh Baptist Church Historic Sanctuary, this event held on Monday, January 20, encourages community service in honor of Dr. King’s legacy. It begins at 8:45 a.m. & is free to attend.

**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER**

As we move forward into the new year, let us honor the legacy of service, compassion, and justice that inspires our work with the SMVF community. Together, we can make a meaningful impact by supporting one another, volunteering, and staying committed to the well-being of those who have served. From the Same Day Access Team, we thank you for all that you do, and here’s to a fulfilling and impactful 2025!



## **CONTACT US!**

**SAME DAY ACCESS TEAM**

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The content in this newsletter is provided for informational purposes only and does not reflect or endorse the views, positions, or policies of any political party. Our goal is to share resources and updates that support the well-being of our community, honor observances that are inclusive, widely recognized and celebrated in the United States military, without bias or alignment with any political affiliation.