

Spring 2022

HUMAN AND VETERAN SERVICES



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ABOUT US

Human and Veteran Services serves as a collaborative hub for resources designated to aid Lee County residents through supportive programs and services. Human and Veteran Services provides financial assistance through help with past due rent, electric bills, and water bills.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the re-launch of our Department's Quarterly Newsletter! Our intentions are simple. Share the great work this team and our partners do on a regular basis.

As we continue to build our team and expand our programs and services to meet the demand of our residents, I cannot be prouder of what has been accomplished by our team and Lee County Government. As you read through this edition, I hope you will be as impressed with the team's work as I am.

As we continue to embrace the "One Org" philosophy, our programs and services continue to expand into unique partnerships with other county departments. Starting with the opening of a Human and Veteran Services Outreach Office in the North Fort Myers Library in 2019, the idea of collaboration with other county departments was born. Since then, we have continued to work with other departments with more intentionality. We created a Mobility Coordinator position in partnership with LeeTran and an EMS Coordinator position, our first public-private venture, with Lee County EMS and LeeHealth.

As we see our community recover, we look forward to serving you and our residents.

DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

Point-in-Time Count & Homeless Service Day

For help with electric, water, or rent, visit our website below

www.leegov.com/dhs/assistance

or call
(239) 533-7900

For those experiencing homelessness call
(239) 533-7996



Each year, Human and Veteran Services holds the annual Point-in-Time count and partners with the Homeless Coalition. This year, the Point-in-Time count took place on January 26th. The Point-in-Time Count is a count on a single night of people who are experiencing homelessness which includes unsheltered and sheltered persons. On January 26th, there were 159 persons sheltered and 401 persons unsheltered experiencing homelessness.

Homeless Service Day occurred on January 29th. The annual event is held to provide services to those experiencing homelessness. Those services are provisions for food, hygiene kits, backpacks, flu shots, haircuts, and information on VA benefits. They also provide referrals for substance abuse and mental health counseling. Due to the safety precautions, the event was scaled back, and the Point-in-Time survey was not conducted at the event.

Human and Veteran Services opens the MARC



On January 16th, an EF2 tornado touched down in Fort Myers damaging or destroying numerous homes in its path. To help those impacted, Emergency Management in partnership with Human and Veteran Services alongside other agencies opened the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC)

at Wa-ke Hatchee Recreation Center to assist those who were impacted. Through the center, staff was able to successfully complete 170 needs assessments and develop an outreach plan for individuals to continue. The MARC closed, but Human and Veteran Services staff are still working to help those who are impacted. Those who were impacted by the tornado can speak to someone at (855) 228-3862 at the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.

DEO Visits Human and Veteran Services

Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity visited Human and Veteran Services the week of February 28th. They were on-site visiting those who were impacted by the tornado, and looking at ways to help those impacted. They helped direct those who were impacted to available resources that could help them.

March is Social Worker Month

We continuously appreciate the social workers in our area but highlighted their service in the month of March. Social work is not easy, but our amazing community strives every day to improve many people's quality of life by working long hours, and going above and beyond the call of duty.



Impact for Kids

In the fiscal year 2022, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners approved an increase in Paternering for Results funding to support non-profit human service providers in building capacity within their organizations. Through the use of these funds IMPACT, an early learning provider in Lee County created its very own website to share its great work with the community. Their new website can be found at <https://impactforkids.org/>.

Veteran Services Success Story

Our office provided advocacy for a widow who lost her husband suddenly due to a heart attack. Her veteran was receiving service-connected compensation from the VA for a seizure disorder. In consultation with the veteran's doctor, we were able to obtain a positive relationship between the seizure disorder and the sudden heart attack. With the favorable medical opinion from the doctor, we were able to secure a monthly benefit for the surviving spouse in the amount of \$1,437.00 per month as well as healthcare benefits from the VA. This was a tremendous benefit for the widow since it prevented her from having to burden her children to sustain her home and independence.

TEAM SPOTLIGHT



Digital Operations

The Digital Operations team handles GIS mapping, manages grants, oversees the HMIS system, updates the website, and helps manage technology. Digital Operations experienced growth during the second quarter of 2022, through the addition of two new team members. Tim Gillmore joined as a new grants analyst focused on assisting with funding applications and compliance for the Homeless Continuum of Care and the Family Impact program area. Juan Albino also moved from Homeless Impact to Digital Operations. Juan serves as the Systems Analyst for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is the County-wide database for client and case management information. Bradley Sissons joined the team as another Technology Systems Specialist to assist HMIS users and ensure high data quality.

Digital Operations is also working on some exciting projects, including working with an outside vendor to create a mobile app for citizens to be connected to services. The team is also working alongside Community Impact to implement Neighborly Software, which will improve processes for owner-occupied rehab, down payment assistance, and contracted programs and services. Lastly, the team is working on the HUD annual action plan for the upcoming 2022 program year and preparing initiatives for celebrating fair housing month.

HUMAN SERVICES STAFF

Employee of the Month

January



Carolyn Dennis

February



Cynthia Bantillo

March



Carolina Alcantara

Employee Birthdays

January

Melissa Espinosa
Jason Krejci
Ashley Candelmo
Parker Smith
Kim Hustad
Divan Hicks-Badger
Liz Correa

February

Nora Hitchcock
Marla Compton
Susan Sarazen
Matthew Puleo
Roger Mercado

March

Ana Villacis
Pam Martin
Amanda Patton
Melanie Arias

New Team Members

Michelle Smith
Kazha Croteau

Matthew Puleo
Pamela Martin

Parker Smith

Length of Service

Debbie Curran - 31 years
Robbie LeBlanc - 21 years
Diane DeGuzman - 18 years
Jason Krejci - 15 years
Sharon McPherson - 13 years

Brian Bissel - 13 Years
George Effing - 13 Years
Juan Albino - 12 Years
Melissa Espinosa - 12 Years

SERVICES PROVIDED BY HVS

R A P I D R E H O U S I N G L
E D H L V E L E C T R I C Y I
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O W E H R E L O M E S N I N C
L I H R O U M L I S C D V B N

Housing Repair
Down Payment
Electric
Water
Rent

Rapid Rehousing
Grants
Human Services
Youth Diversion
Veterans