



## 2021 VETERANS' SERVICE AGENCY ANNUAL REPORT

### *“Serving Those Who Served For Us”*

2021 was amazing in so many ways for our little Agency! We struggled at times to find ways to meet the needs of our veterans and to provide them with the latest information and updates on many issues facing them as the COVID pandemic ebbed and flowed and saw new variants rearing their heads – but we proudly pushed forward, living up to the creed that we will “Always Move Forward and Never Retreat”

We continued to expand on our newfound way of meeting and providing outreach through virtual trainings, informational sessions and on-line resource fairs and discussions. We helped form a new regional coalition made up of veteran service agencies from area counties that was called the Southern Tier Finger Lakes Coalition. Membership includes the following counties: Tioga, Tompkins, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Cayuga and Schuyler as well as Bradford County PA. Our focus was to collectively work on the quality of life issues, claims and assistance needs as a whole rather than through small isolated means. Thus by combining input we would better be able to organize activities around the needs we all had in common within our veteran communities. This group meets once per month virtually to take about a wide range of topics.

Our statistics bear out that even though we continued to see pandemic issues limit our ability, at times, to provide in-person services and supports, we broke records in our office! We provided 3,424 services to 2,036 veterans and their families; of that number, 296 were first time users of our services!!! We got back on track with our live outreach events that were both in-person and virtual – these events saw a record number of attendees as well! We held 73 events with a total of 3,076 people from our veteran community in attendance! **That’s right, this is not a misprint – total number of veterans and family members served in various capacities in 2021 was 6,112!!!!**

We could not have done all of this without the support of our Administrative Services Legislative Committee, Chairperson of the County Legislature – Martha Sauerbrey and all of our County Legislators! We also need to thank our many community partners, if it wasn’t for their dedication to their jobs and communities, we would not be able to provide help and support to our veterans! A huge acknowledgement and thanks needs to be said to the Tioga County Mental Hygiene Department, their staff, their clinic workers and Director Lori Morgan who were one of the first community partners we had that committed to aiding our veterans and their families; specifically, in the areas of Post-Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, mental health, substance use disorders and suicide intervention and prevention. They didn’t just provide help with services,

# Veterans' Service Agency

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they provided us the opportunity through a grant that began 5 years ago, with the financial means to offer non-clinical outreach in the form of awareness and informational events that has been at the heart of our mission to serve our veterans and their families in every way possible since.

The Agency's Director was recognized by his peers in the NYS County Veterans Service Officers Association for the outstanding efforts his staff and he have made in helping our local veteran community in a variety of creative ways. Mike was appointed to serve as the National Representative from New York to the National Association of County Veteran Services Officers; as well as the Legislative Committee Chair for NYS CVSOA.

2021 brought many opportunities for change and enhancement of services that will be implemented in 2022. We are proud to announce that we were granted a new permanent part-time Veteran Service Officer position that brings our staff to a compliment of three in 2022. We have received American Rescue Plan Act funding to enhance our outreach capabilities in 2022 as well as grant funding opportunities through New York State that will continue to better the lives of our veterans and their families going forward.

We are truly honored and humbled to serve our fellow veterans and to be given the opportunity to make a difference in their lives. We realized in 2021 that we were missing the opportunity to serve other brothers and sisters out there who often didn't think the term veteran applied to them and their families: those serving on active duty, in the guard and reserve. Our definition of veterans includes these folks and we want them to know that our doors are always open to them for help in gratitude for their service to their country!

It is my great privilege and honor to present this report on behalf of our Agency and my staff, Bonnie and Grace, who without their hard work and dedication to our veteran brothers and sisters; none of our accomplishments this past year and going forward into 2022 would be possible!

Very Respectfully Submitted,

Michael F. Middaugh  
Director