

# HOMELESS VETERAN STAND DOWN

## Information Guide

**The following information will act as a guide for your department or chapter to hold a Homeless Veteran Stand Down. As you are planning when to hold this event think about the time of year and the changing seasons. We hold our event in the fall in hopes to prepare them with warm clothing for winter. This can be a life changing event for many veterans and lead them on a path to success.**

The Homeless Veteran Stand Down is held at DAV NHQ the first Friday in October each year. The following are guidelines on what you can do and when. We partner with the local VA Medical Center to host the event. Your counterpart at the VA could be an Outreach Coordinator or Outreach Social Worker, as they are often a great resource for homeless veterans in your surrounding area.

First, decide where the event will be held and what the setup will look like.

Here are some moving parts taking place during the day of the event:

**Haircuts**: You will have approximately 4-5 beauticians cutting hair.

**Manicurists**: Have approximately 3 people filling this position.

**Vendors**: approximately 40 - 60 vendors. Services include VA healthcare, community outreach with transitional housing, substance abuse, legal assistance, employment, education, etc.

Find vendors who can offer clothing, jackets and shoes

Immunizations and blood draws

Assist with filling out applications for housing

Employers who hire veterans

Financial education and budgeting assistance

Education planning and support

Onsite support services

**Food**: Breakfast and lunch should be provided and served by volunteers.

**Backpack and items being handed out**: The last moving part of this event are the backpacks being handed out. We do this the last hour of the event, the backpacks are full of great items and will be awkward to carry around while meeting with the different vendors.

## JANUARY

- Schedule a meeting with the group of people who are helping you organize your Stand Down to discuss event expectations and how to store the donations until the event.
- You will need to prepare 250 backpacks for the event. You will also want to prepare 25-30 bags for female veterans that include feminine hygiene products.
- It's also good to have a few kids' bags or backpacks in case any children show up.

**Below is an example list of items you may want for your Stand Down:**

ITEM DESCRIPTION	TOTAL	TOTAL
Kids Bag	5	3
Krafts/Toys	5	3
ITEM DESCRIPTION	TOTAL	TOTAL
Socks	500	
Beanies	250	
Scarves	250	
Gloves	250	
Handwarmers (2 per bag)	500	
Footwarmers (2 per bag)	500	
Ponchos	250	
Playing Cards	250	
Pens	250	
Mirrors	250	
Earplugs	250	
Hygiene Kits	250	
Shaving Cream	250	
Toothbrushes	250	
Bars of Soap (2 per bag)	500	
Toothpaste	250	
Deodorant	250	
Baby Wipes	250	
Women's Pads (1 box)	25	
Women's Tampons (1 box)	25	
Tissues	250	
Floss	250	
Emergency Blanket	250	
Combs	250	
Nail Clippers	250	
Chapstick	250	
First Aid Kit	250	
Facial Wipes	250	
Lady Razors	250	
Men's Razors	250	
Jackets	250	
Wet Weather Liner	250	
Canteen Water Bottles	250	
Care Packages	250	

- There is no set list of companies to contact for donations. Donors can be found by doing a Google search. If you search “companies in the US that make \_\_\_\_\_”, a list of companies will be provided and you can determine who you think would be best to reach out to.

Below is an example of vendors we have used in the past:

DONOR COMPANY	ACCEPT	DENY	MAYBE	SHIPPED	RECEIVED	NOTES
Justin's Snacks						
Zee Zee's						
Welch's Fruit Snacks		DENY				
Frito Lay						
Betty Crocker		DENY				
Klement's						
Hillshire Snacking						
Chomps	ACCEPT					Email stated we will received by 9/20
Western's Smokehouse						
Sargento						
Bear Naked		DENY				
Kashi		DENY				
PrepastedToothbrushes.com						
SmileMakers						
Bombas	ACCEPT					
Soapbox Soaps	ACCEPT			5/18/2019	5/29/2019	
Grandpa Soaps (Kirk's Naturals)	ACCEPT				7/2/2019	will be working on order week of 6/17
Veeda						
DUDE Wipes	ACCEPT			6/26-6/29	6/28/2019	
Operation Gratitude	ACCEPT			9/16/2019		
Operation Hat Trick						
CoCoFloss						
BoldFoot Socks						
Clif/Luna Bars		DENY				
Love of Country						
Community Coffee	ACCEPT			9/5/2019	9/9/2019	
Trial Size Donations						
Traveltoilettrykits.com						

- Begin reaching out to companies in January because some have deadlines and limits on their annual donations. If you do not reach out early in the year, you may miss your opportunity.
- Send out an email or letter to all possible donors to detail what the Homeless Stand Down is and why we are requesting their product.

## **FEBRUARY – APRIL**

- There is not much to do in these first few months except continue to reach out to vendors for donations. **NOTE: Some of your donations will come from the VA in the form of water bottles, first aid kits and hygiene kits. However, do not let this stop you from receiving these same donations from other companies. After the Stand Down is completed you can inventory your leftover items and donate them to local veteran shelters or facilities. Never be afraid to receive items, as we will always have places to donate them.**

## **MAY**

In May, discuss the layout of the Stand Down to ensure the setup of tables and chairs and any other additional furniture or materials that you may need are available. You will schedule your first monthly meeting in June. You will schedule these meetings with individuals from local organizations who will be participating. The VA, Goodwill, Red Cross, etc. are all great organizations to partner with. At the end of each meeting, I would suggest asking everyone what dates work for the following month to schedule each meeting. (i.e., at the end of June's meeting, ask what day in July works best for everyone).

- Each month, go over the details of the event and continue to update everyone regarding vendors, donations, layout, etc. This group of people will help you organize the event, so communicating information with each other is key!

## **JUNE-JULY**

Reach out to a DJ, caterer, local tent/ party rental company and any other service you find that will be participating and/or donating their services to the Stand Down.

- Contact a caterer. Sometimes they will supply food as a full or partial in-kind donation. Finding veteran-owned establishments will usually work in everyone's favor. The caterer provides breakfast (donuts, bagels and drinks) and lunch (hot dogs, burgers, sides, etc.).
- Contact a company that rents tents, tables, and chairs. This is sometimes donated or greatly discounted, considering the nature of the event.
- You will need plenty of ice, so it's great to have a company donate it for the event.
- At least one handicap-accessible bathroom should be provided and a few portable toilets should be delivered the day before the event.
- You will need to discuss where parking will be on the day of the event.
- Every year during the Opening Ceremony, an invocation is given and the National Anthem is performed. Always make a point to try and see if you can find someone who would like to do these two things. Again, try and locate a veteran, a family member of a veteran, or a local individual who supports DAV.
- It is recommended to have no more than 5, but no less than 3 beauticians (depending on space).
- Contact Empire Beauty School, or any other style training facility, if there is one local to your event. Since 2018, we started handing out flyers as veterans register, letting them

know that Empire Hair School provides free haircuts to veterans any day of the year. This is an example:



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!**

**FREE HAIRCUTS YEAR 'ROUND**

Empire Beauty schools appreciate you and your service to our country. Any time and at your convenience you can visit one of our schools and receive a haircut **free of charge. This is not a special and you do not need a coupon.** We provide this service during business hours and we do it year 'round. All we need from you is your military identification upon checkout! We call it our Hero's Free Haircut and it's the least we could do!

**We have two locations in the Greater Cincinnati area:**

EMPIRE BEAUTY SCHOOL  
7285 TURFWAY ROAD  
FLORENCE, KY 41042  
859.283.2690

EMPIRE BEAUTY SCHOOL  
8419 COLERAIN AVENUE  
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45239  
513.276.496

- If you have room for softball games, those are always a great addition. However, you can plan for other games such as corn hole, Jenga, horseshoes, pickle ball, etc.

## **AUGUST**

- You will want to schedule a meeting to discuss signage and banners. The banners recognize all of the businesses and organizations that have donated time or items. Make sure to discuss the deadlines for ordering everything.
- Make sure to send an email to every individual and/or company that donated to the Homeless Stand Down requesting their logos.
- You will need volunteers to help on the day of the Stand Down. This can be with people within your organization or through corporate sponsors.

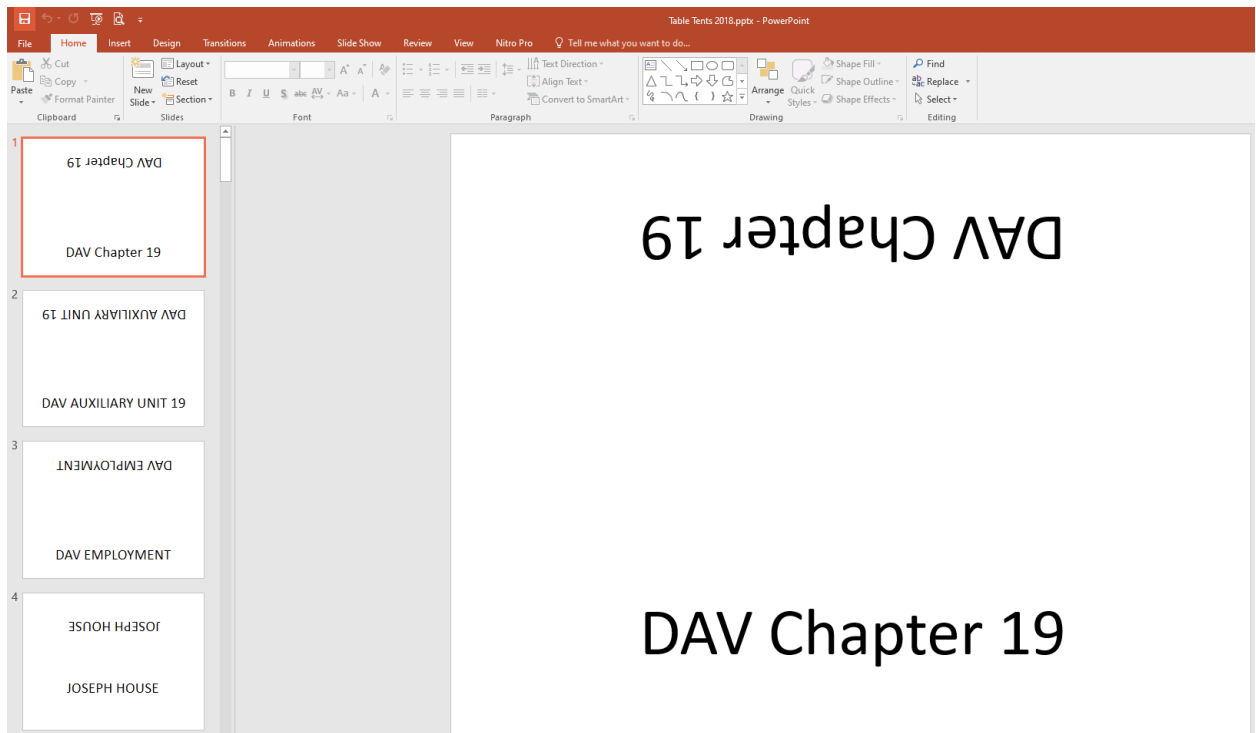
## **SEPTEMBER**

- This is the month where everything starts to pick up. September is the DEADLINE for your donations to be received. You will want to receive all donations before filling the backpacks. You should set a deadline of one week before you stuff the items in the backpacks. You will work with your volunteers to help fill the backpacks, which will occur approximately one week before the Stand Down. For example, in 2022, the Stand Down was on Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, and volunteers came on Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup> to fill backpacks. Continuous communication with your volunteers will be important during this month. You need approximately 20-30 volunteers to complete the backpack stuffing.
- Make sure you follow up with catering, rentals, and anyone else that you extended an invitation to or who will be participating in the event that day.

- Obtain a list of volunteers' names and make sure someone is in charge of your volunteer table, checking in and registering your volunteers for the event.
- It's best to have a volunteer sign-up sheet in order to properly register the volunteers the morning of the Stand Down. This details how many volunteers you will need at every location. What time the volunteers need to report and it gives a time in/time out,
- If needed, you will want to print volunteer name tags. These are useful for veterans who might need help but don't know who to ask. Volunteers should be well versed in the on information about the DAV and programs we offer, who vendors are and where vendors are located.

I recommend arriving by 7:00 a.m. the morning of the event, just to make sure everything is in order.

- Make sure you have a complete vendor list, which may be provided by your VA. You will need to prepare and print off table tents for each vendor. Even if a vendor does not respond stating they will be present during the event, create a table tent and put it on a table with a minimum of one table per vendor. If you try to only put up table cards for those who RSVP'd, you will find yourself running around like a chicken with your head cut off, creating new ones, or trying to re-set up your vendor tables.
- You can create The Table Tent Cards as a PowerPoint document. Here is a sample.



- You can also create a Word or Excel document listing all the vendors who will be attending the event. This list will be passed out to the veterans as they register at the registration table, along with the Empire Beauty School flyer. This will help guide the veterans who attend and make sure they see everyone they would need to while present at the Stand Down. It gets very crowded, and it is hard to see everything that is being provided for the vendors.

**Example of our Vendor/table list helps veterans to navigate the area:**

<u>2019 DAV HOMELESS STAND DOWN VENDOR LIST</u>	
<b><u>Employment and Education (20)</u></b>	
Amazon	Novolex
Kroger	Club Chef
Cincinnati State	Ohio Means Jobs
Elite Welding Academy	Kentucky Career Center
VA Voc Rehab	Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehab
Kable Staffing and MBS Technical Staffing	Gateway Community & Tech College
Castellani Group of Companies	University of Cincinnati
Craftforce	US Census
Staffmark	Crown Services
Employment Attire Table	Veteran Employment Staffing
<b><u>Substance and Abuse and Mental Health Services (8)</u></b>	
VA Military Sex Trauma/LGBT/Fam Svcs & Women's Clin	North Key
Joseph House	VA Sudep Services
Mental Health America	VA Suicide Prevention
NKY Office of Drug and Control Policy	Vet Center for Readjustment Counseling
<b><u>Housing and Financial Assistance (13)</u></b>	
Northern Kentucky Emergency Shelter	Talbert House SSVF and HCHV Program
Center for Independent Living Options	VA Community Outreach
Housing Authority of Covington	VA Community Outreach Survey
Ohio Valley Goodwill	Volunteers of America
Parkway Center	Welcome House
Shelterhouse	Avalon Hospice
	Brighton Center
<b><u>Legal / Banking Assistance (2)</u></b>	
Internal Revenue Taxpayer Advocate Service	
Huntington Bank	
<b><u>Medical Services (6)</u></b>	
VA Medical Center	VA Women's Health Center
Walgreens	VA Whole Health
VA H-PACT	NKY Health Department
<b><u>Benefits (4)</u></b>	
Social Security Administration	VA Benefit Administration
Support Management Solutions	VA Minority Program
<b><u>Clothing (1)</u></b>	
Mt. Zion Baptist Church	
<b><u>Self-Care Services (2)</u></b>	
Satin Hands	
Haircuts	
<b><u>Telephone Services (2)</u></b>	
Stand Up Wireless	
Caption Call Telephone	

- You will want to coordinate who will donate or purchase water for the event.
- Make sure to speak with your self-care vendors (Stylists and manicurists) about hair supplies. Usually you will want to restock capes, barbicide, spray bottles, neck wraps, paper towels, and combs, brushes to brush off the cut hair, one set of clippers, small dishes to put the barbicide in, and cape sanitizer. You need one of each for each station. Except for combs, you need one comb for each veteran haircut. **The stylists can guide you to exactly what they will need or if anything has been forgotten. Make sure to keep this as cheap as possible, or ask if they are able to provide any of their own supplies.**

## **BACKPACK STUFFING: LAST FRIDAY OF SEPTEMBER/ONE WEEK BEFORE STAND DOWN**

- The week of filling backpacks, you will want to organize and begin preparation for that Friday.
- Set approximately 5-6 tables in an assembly-line fashion. I recommend doing a test run before the volunteers come in to do backpacks on Friday. See how to make all donations fit best in the backpack. Organize all donated items on the tables.
- You will want to pre-stage all items during this time. You will want to have everything ready to go when the volunteers arrive Friday morning. You should only have to brief them and then get started. One thing about the set-up: make sure you have plenty of trash bins staged around your assembly area. You will have to take all your boxes, etc., to the back to be crushed or to the garbage to be disposed of.
- Once all the volunteers arrive, you will meet them and escort them back to where you will be stuffing the backpacks.
- After you escort the volunteers to where the staging area is, you will give them a safety brief. You will inform them where the restrooms are located. You will let them know where the exits are in case of an emergency and where to assemble in case of a fire.
- From there, you will determine how you expect the backpacks to be filled. Run through the assembly line of donated items that have been staged, show them how to fill the backpack, and tell them the quantity of items to be stuffed per backpack.
- Once you have demonstrated how to have the backpacks stuffed, allow them to begin. I will warn you: do not expect to make all your volunteers happy. You will have some who insist on giving their opinions and get upset if you do not take their suggestions. Do not be afraid to stand your ground and remain in control. Just be respectful when you decline any “unwanted” input.

**Operation Gratitude is a company that will donate care packages. You will definitely want to receive this item. Inside their care packages are cookies, coffee, socks, entertainment, a hygiene kit and more. Unfortunately, when they donate their care boxes, they cannot sort through them and take out specific items. Therefore, when you receive these care packages, you are going to have to arrange for someone to go through them and take out hand sanitizers and mouth washes. These two items contain alcohol, and we cannot provide any donated items that contain alcohol. This is a VERY IMPORTANT note for your donations.**

If these care packages come on one wooden pallet, stage another area away from your assembly line and have approximately four of your volunteers open those boxes, take those two items out, reseal the boxes, and stage them on a second pallet that will be staged for just this. Stage large cardboard boxes near this area so you can put the hand sanitizers and mouth washes in them so they can be re-donated.

**NOTE: The hand sanitizers can be donated to local schools for the kids, and there is usually a local place to donate the mouthwash.**



Once all the backpacks are filled, you pull any unnecessary items from the care packages, and the day is complete, you will break everything down and stage the backpacks and care packages. You stage these because the following Thursday you will roll these backpacks to the area where they will be handed out.

## **WEEK OF THE STAND DOWN**

### **MONDAY**

Get with your team and have them start setting up the veteran registration and volunteer sign-in tables.

Set up your hair and nail stations.

Set up a private place for blood draws, HIV, flu shots, etc.

- Set up the tables for the clothing vendors to hand out their donated clothing items and jackets.
- If you have not already done so, print off 200 Empire flyers and 200 Vendor lists to be given out at the registration tables. (ALSO NOTE: Have pens, highlighters and a couple note pads and clip boards staged at these tables. Your responsibility is to make sure all these items are on the table and ready for use and to be given out.
- If you have not already prepared and printed the Table Tent Cards for the vendor tables, you should do so now. As soon as the tables are staged on Thursday, you will want to place these table tents.
- Have the Wi-Fi network and guest password readily available if needed.

### **TUESDAY**

- You will want to go to CosmoProf and/or Sally's Beauty Supply in order to get any items you are missing for the stylists or barbers.
- Start getting your signs ready. You should have signs for Haircuts, Vendors, Job Fair, Vendor Drop Off, Veteran Drop Off/Veteran Pick Up, and Parking signs, including Exit and Enter. Any signage that makes the event easier and more accessible is advised.
- Follow up with your provider to make sure water has been purchased or donated.
- Ensure porta-pots have been delivered. If not, you need to contact your provider and find out what the delay is.
- Set out all the beauty supplies on the tables and stage the tables. When preparing these tables, just think of what a "hair station" would look like at the salon.

### **WEDNESDAY**

- You will spend most of this day asking questions, finalizing details, making any last-minute changes, and finishing anything you were not able to finish on Monday and Tuesday.

### **THURSDAY**

- You will want to bring the backpacks and any other items to the staging area.

- All banners need to be hung. You will need to stage the podium, American flag and DAV flag. These will be needed for Opening Ceremonies.
- As soon as the space is available to you, begin staging all these tables and chairs. These tables and chairs are used specifically for the vendors and the job fair employers.

## **FRIDAY**

- I recommend you be on site by 7:00 am to tend to any finalizing touches. Also, at this time, you will need to stage all your signs outside.
- Make sure drinks are in the coolers in the morning.
- The event begins at 9:00 am.
- Wi-Fi guest password should be posted.

**HAVE A GREAT TIME...YOU WORKED HARD. TAKE THE TIME TO TALK AND MINGLE WITH THE VETERANS. THAT IS WHAT WILL MAKE ALL YOUR HARD WORK, FRUSTRATIONS AND HEADACHES WORTH IT. THEY ARE THE REASON WE DO THIS.**