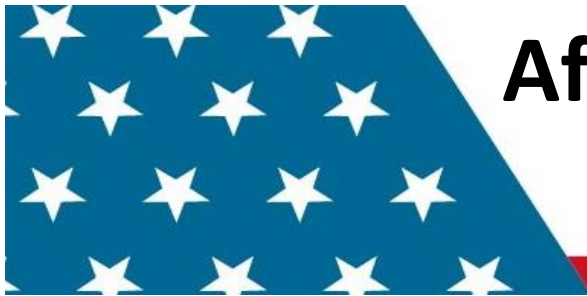




# Veteran Stand Down



## After Action Report



## Background:

Washington County is home to approximately 28,000 veterans, representing a diverse range of periods of service, military roles, and current needs. Many of our local veterans struggle with unstable housing situations as well as needs related to employment, health, and other issues that arise. The Washington County Stand Down is a one-day event to bring together service providers and other community partners to ensure that veterans have access to resources they need to be successful.

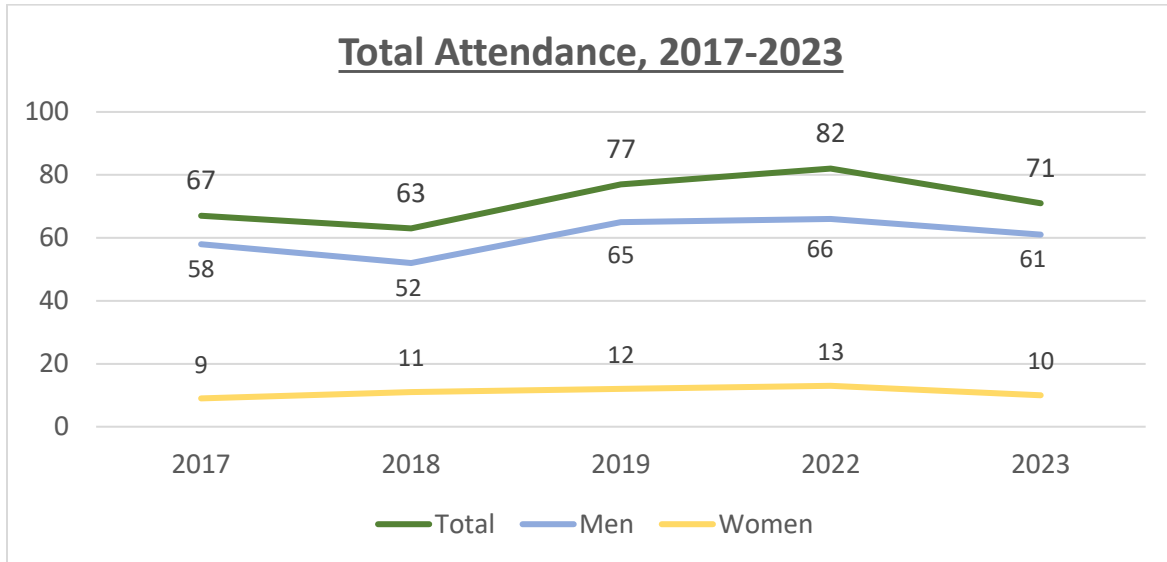
This year was the fifth annual Washington County Stand Down. It was held on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at Sonrise Church in Hillsboro, and coordinated by a planning team that met monthly from February until November. The event was funded by Washington County through the County's Office of Disability, Aging and Veterans Services, with additional support from a Stand Down Grant through the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, and also made possible through very generous donations from Sonrise Church and NW Natural.

A total of seventy-one veterans attended this year's Stand Down. Service providers representing fifty different organizations registered to participate, as well as nine employers at the job fair. A total of fifty-three veterans received surplus gear and warm clothing donations, many received important medical care, and hot breakfast and lunch was provided to everyone.

The Veteran Stand Down is truly an event for the community and by the community; additional volunteers and local sponsors include:

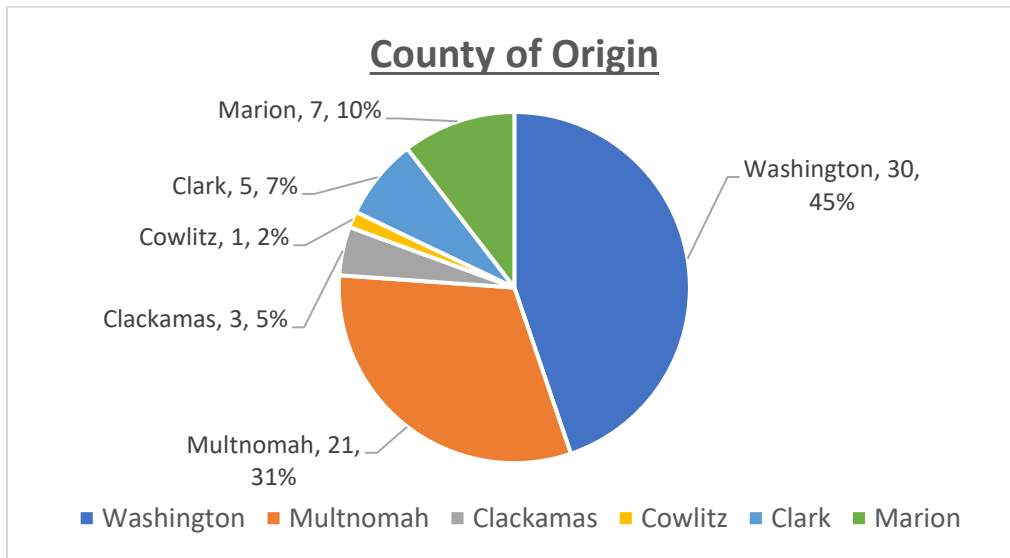
- Sonrise Church hosted the event and assisted with use of the venue to administer the wide range of services available for veterans;
- Titan Freight stored surplus gear donations and generously transported six pallets of warm weather supplies for veterans at the event;
- WorkSource Portland Metro and the VA Portland Health Care System community engagement and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) programs provided logistical support for the job fair and extensive outreach to veterans who could benefit from this event;
- University of Portland ROTC provided the color guard during the opening ceremony;
- Edgar Louis Wales, on behalf of Soldier Songs & Voices, performed during the opening ceremony;
- Twenty-eight volunteers made the event possible by helping with registration, surplus distribution, food, and access to medical services;
- Starbucks donated coffee for attendees;
- NW Natural donated lunch for attendees;
- Washington County Disability, Aging and Veteran Services provided financial support, logistical coordination, and donations of event supplies.

# The Veterans at the 2023 Stand Down

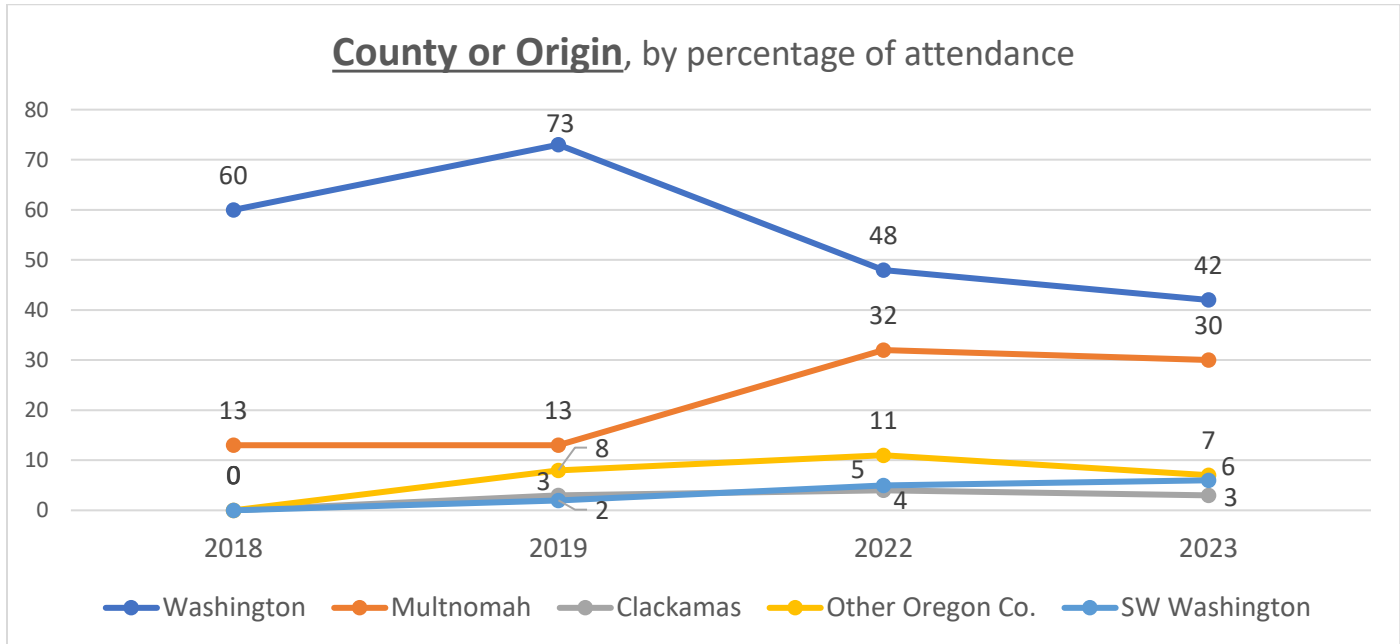


The chart above indicates that the number of veterans served has continued to increase from 2017 and remained fairly stable the past three years. Outreach efforts remain focused on building awareness in the community, especially with the two year interruption during the height of the COVID pandemic and the location change from the Hillsboro Elks Lodge in 2017-19 to Sunrise Church in 2022-23. Sunrise is an excellent location for this event and we hope to continue this partnership in the future.

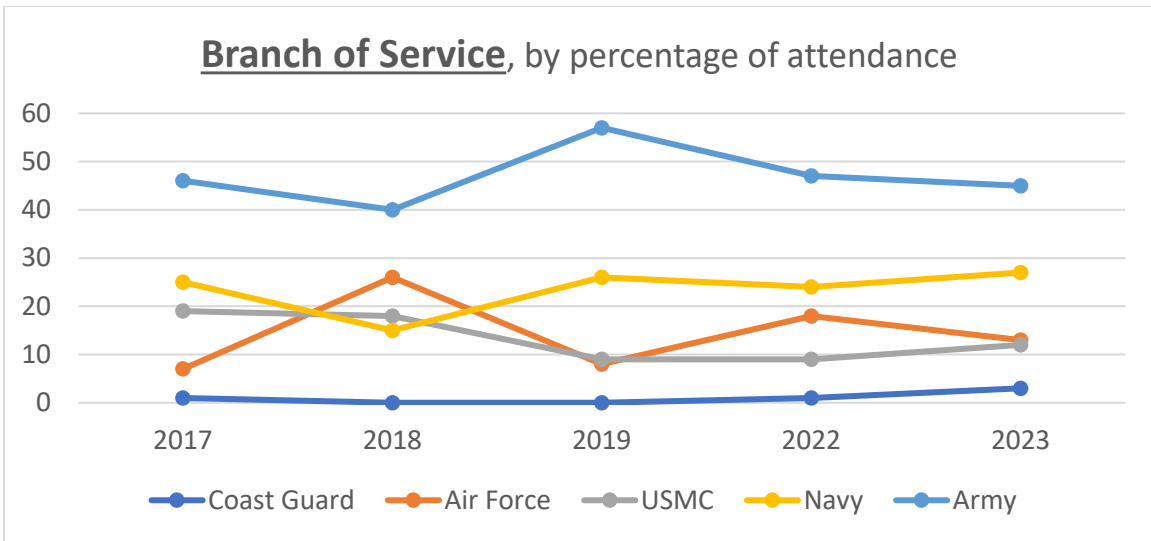




The majority of veteran attending the Stand Down this year are Washington County residents, comprising nearly half of all veterans at the event (45%). The next highest county of origin is neighboring Multnomah County with 30%. This is consistent with the 2022 Stand Down, and a more regional composition than previous Stand Downs between 2017-2019 as seen in the graph below.



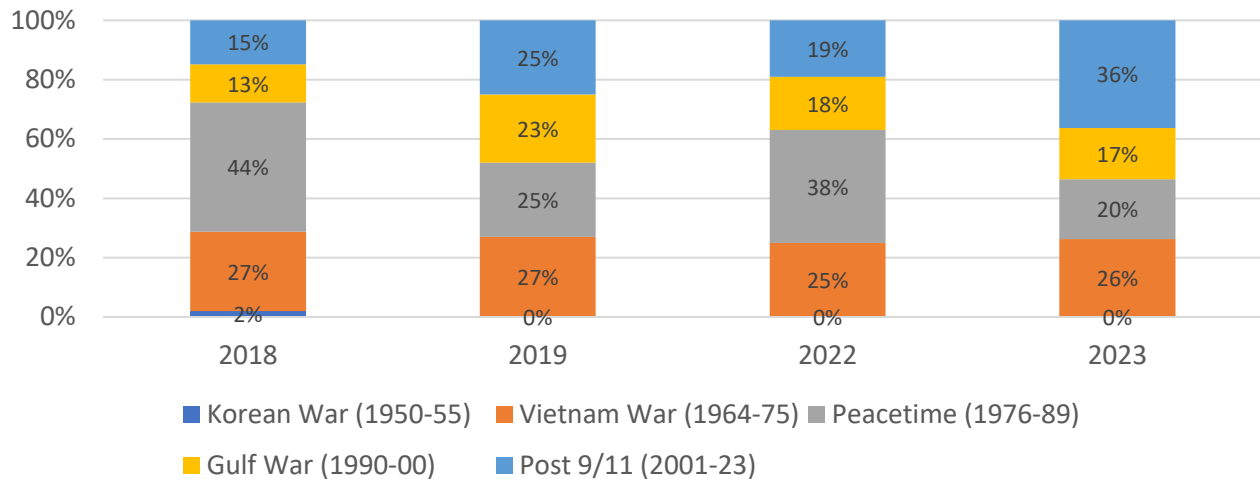




Consistent with previous years, the majority of veterans served in the Army. There is some variation with other branches but overall the rates remain fairly stable with Army and Navy veterans representing the majority of attendees. VA benefits are not tied to any specific branch so this data is more informational for future outreach than service provision.



## Era of Service, by percentage of attendance

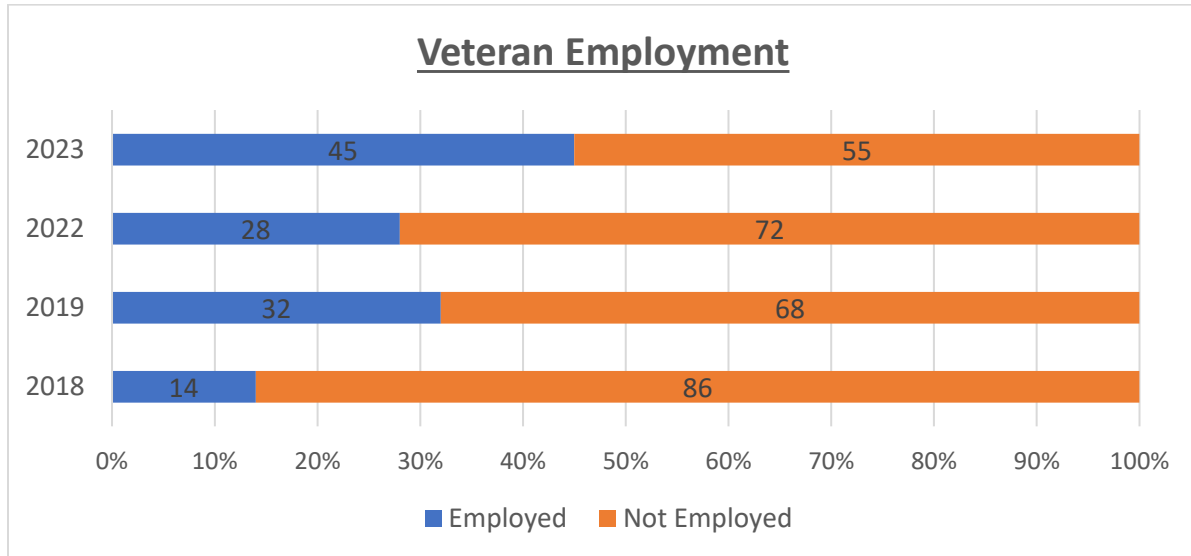


The greatest number of veterans at this year's Stand Down served during the Post 9/11 era, roughly defined for purposes of this report as 2001-2023. This is a younger demographic than in prior years, and suggestive of a need for different resources than last year's event which was predominantly Peacetime and Vietnam era veterans approaching retirement age. The increase in Post 9/11 veterans at the event is encouraging for participation in the Stand Down's job fair, and potentially driven by increased awareness of VA services following the 2022 passage of the PACT Act that expanded benefits for many veterans in this era who served in SW Asia since 1990.

The chart above indicates the portion of peacetime veterans attending the event has fluctuated by 13%-19% each year, but the total number of veterans at the Stand Down who served prior to 1989 remains about half of all attendees and demonstrates the continued need for aging services through the VA as well as state and local providers.



# Employment Services



Employment among veterans at the Stand Down has increased with 45% of respondents currently employed. The Stand Down's job fair grew this year to include nine businesses and staffing agencies on site to meet with job candidates as well as support from employment assistance representatives from WorkSource Oregon Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and the VA Portland Health Care System community engagement and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) programs. There was significantly more participation in this year's job fair and veterans reported employment as one of the top reasons for attending the Stand Down.

## Fallen Soldier Table



The Veteran Stand Down is about service and community; it brings together those who have served our County in the military, their families, and the partners here at home as service providers and volunteers at the event.

Thank you to Nathan Beste (Army) for coordinating the Fallen Soldier Table at our Stand Down this year. Below is the description displayed at the table:

*This table is our way of symbolizing the fact that members of those serving our country are missing and are unable to be with us. This symbolizes the fate of our own, be it: a Marine, a Soldier, a Sailor, an Airman, or a Coast Guardsman, missing or alone against his oppressors and the singular life given in defense of our great nation.*



# Medical Services

The 2023 Veteran Stand Down provided a variety of medical services, including Medical Teams International Dental Van, VA Whole Health Initiative, My HealtheVet, VA healthcare enrollment assistance, VA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program, Portland VA LGBTQ+ Health Program, CareOregon Advantage, Washington County Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) Program, VA Women Veteran Program, Foot and Nail Care on-site provided by Monica Stutzman, VA Suicide Prevention Program, VA Portland Post 9/11 Military to VA (M2VA) Team, The Red Cross, Center on Brain Injury Research and Training with on-site TBI screenings, Portland Vet Center, and blood pressure assessments on-site by the Medical Reserve Corps Nurses.

There was a vaccine shortage and no flu shots or COVID boosters were available this year, but those will be on-site resources in the future based on supply and public health recommendations at the time.

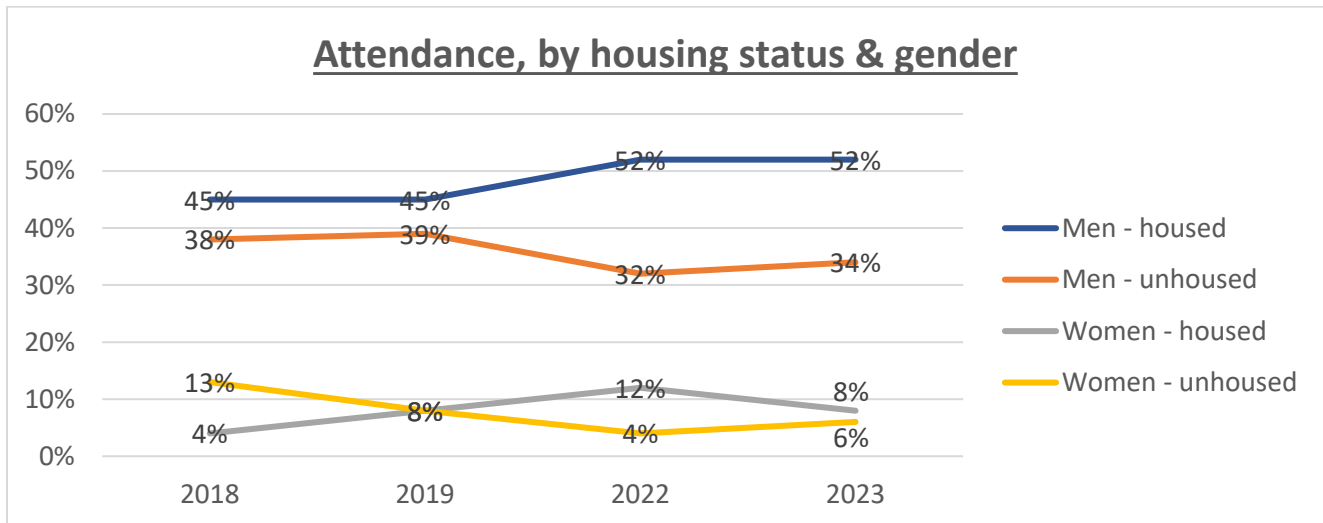




# Housing Services

A primary focus of Stand Down services continues to be housing assistance. Service providers assisting veterans with housing included: VA Health Care System HUD-VASH, The Salvation Army Veterans & Family Center, Washington County Housing Advocacy, Open Door Housingworks, Community Action, and Fort Kennedy.

These housing programs were all co-located at the Stand Down to support smooth and successful referrals to other housing agencies as well as health and other benefit programs to promote long-term housing stability.



To determine the number of homeless veterans, we used the definition from 42 U.S. Code 11302 consistent with other HUD and point in time count definitions. The Stand Down continues to be primarily attended by male veterans, and the encouraging increase observed last year among men in secure housing has stabilized with 60% of male veterans attending this year's event housed. Women have had greater variability but we believe that to be due to the small sample size, with only ten women veterans attending this year's event.



# Additional Services

Clothing and outdoor gear was distributed to all veterans in need. One of the Stand Down coordinators ordered items throughout the year from the Defense Logistics Agency, which stores military “surplus gear” at different bases throughout the country. Through a partnership with Transition Projects, who coordinates the Portland Veteran’s Stand Down in September, we ordered supplies for both events to distribute to veterans in need. This year’s Stand Down had six pallets of surplus gear as well as ten bins of warm weather supplies. Specific items distributed to veterans included sleeping bags, backpacks, jackets, fleece coats, long underwear tops and bottoms, pants, shirts, duffel bags, gloves, shirts, underwear, socks, and hats. Veterans designated as homeless also received comprehensive hygiene kits and non-perishable food packs.

Special thanks to Titan Freight for transporting the surplus gear donations to these veterans in need.





**A total of 50 service providers registered for the Stand Down, and brought a wide range of important resources for veterans. Some partner organizations not previously identified in this report include:**

- Fido Food Bank, who connected with 57 veterans at the event and distributed meals, and donated pet gear (collars, leashes, toys, bowls) to 36 veterans with a total 46 cats and dogs.
- K9 Kavalry, who offer free dog training to veterans.
- Dress for Success Oregon, who provide professional attire, a network of support, and career development tools for women.
- Soldiers, Songs & Voices, who performed at the opening ceremony and offers free guitar and song writing workshops for military personnel and veterans.
- Veteran service organizations including Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2666, VFW Post 2666 Auxiliary, and American Legion Post 2.
- VA benefits assistance through the Portland Regional Office Public Contact, and Washington County Disability, Aging, and Veteran Services.
- Oregon Department of Human Services Self-Sufficiency, assisting with food benefits, cash for families, child care assistance, refugee services and domestic violence.
- Oregon Child Support Program, whose military liaison provide information about child support services and career opportunities for veterans interested in employment.
- Legal assistance through Metropolitan Public Defender, Oregon Law Center, and Washington County Veterans Treatment Court.
- Team Rubicon USA, a veteran-led humanitarian organization serving communities after disasters.
- 211 Info with referral services for a wide range of assistance.
- Social Security Administration, who helped with questions and assistance related to SSA benefits.
- Veterans Stronger Together Coalition, building networks of support for veterans.
- Disabled American Veterans and Go Vets Oregon, providing transportation assistance to veterans.
- Paralyzed Veterans of America Tri-State Chapter, offering rehabilitation through sports and recreation.
- Easter Seals, offering Veterans with assistance gaining meaningful and lucrative employment.
- Operation Red Wings Foundation, providing therapeutic services to veterans and their families.
- Community Energy Project, with free home services for safety, health, and energy efficiency.
- Oregon National Guard Service Member and Support Program.





## Food Services

Hot breakfast was provided to all veterans at the Stand Down as well as coffee donated from Starbucks in Bethany Village, Portland.

The breakfast services were made possible by the efforts of Greg and Deanna Levinson (Navy), and Vicki Horn (Marine Corps).

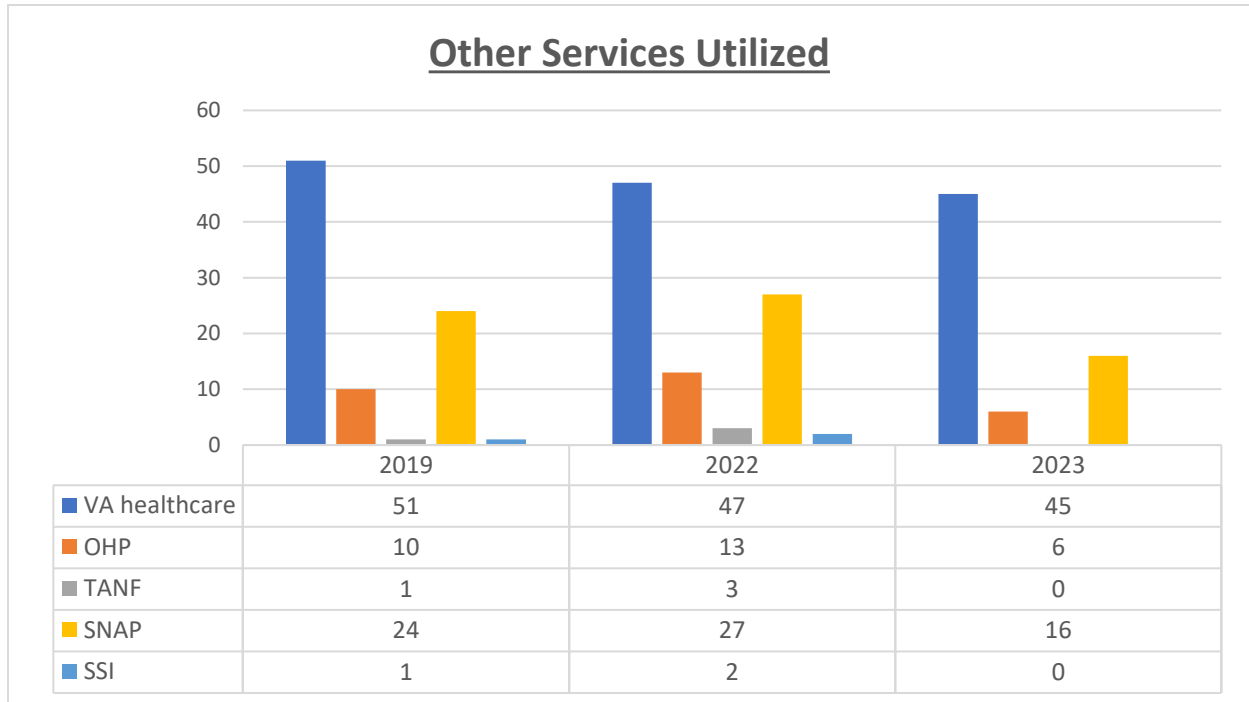


NW Natural provided an excellent barbecue lunch for everyone in attendance.

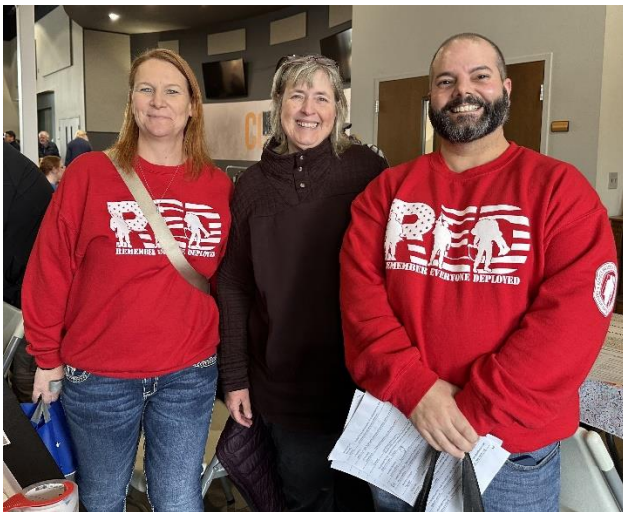
Many thanks to the sponsors and volunteers who made this event possible.



## Other Services Utilized



This year's data is consistent with the prior Stand Downs, which found the majority of veterans at the event were enrolled in VA healthcare and about one in three receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food assistance. The DHS Mobile Enrollment Team participated in this year's event to help get veterans and their families connected with these benefits on-site. Use of Oregon Health Plan remains low compared with VA healthcare and SNAP assistance, so this will continue to be monitored with the 2023 launch of the Oregon Veteran Dental Program and OHP dental care because most veterans are not eligible for dental care through the VA. Enrollment representatives for these other services will continue to be tabling at the Stand Down to support additional access to these benefits.





## Next Steps:

The Washington County Veteran Stand Down is one of the largest veteran events in the region and provides a wide range of critical services to veterans throughout the County and surrounding communities. While this is a one-day event, the services and atmosphere at the Stand Down are representative of the work that programs, sponsors, and volunteers do throughout the year.



Washington County Veteran Services, along with each partner that made this event possible, are committed to continuing the support for veterans on an ongoing basis. Planning efforts and coordination will begin in the Spring of 2024 to work on the next Stand Down and anyone interested in supporting this initiative is encouraged to get involved by contacting Sean Files at [sean\\_files@washingtonty.gov](mailto:sean_files@washingtonty.gov)

