



Veterans Health Administration
VA Montana Health Care System

Press Release

Fort Harrison VA (406) 447-7303
Public Affairs Office www.montana.va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VA, community partners distribute Thanksgiving meals to local Veterans, families

Helena, Mont. – The Montana VA’s Homeless & Recovery Program, along with partner community organizations took part in distributing forty-five full Thanksgiving meals to Veterans and their families in the Helena area, Nov. 21.

This was the Helena First Assembly of God’s sixth year leading this effort. It is the second year that the VA participated in this community collaboration along with other partners including the Montana National Guard Family Assistance Center, Volunteers of America, and the Lewis & Clark Co. Joining Community Forces initiative.

The Joining Community Forces’ key service area for faith coordinated all of the partner organizations’ participation with the First Assembly of God.

“This effort is truly an example of how Joining Community Forces can support our Military and Veteran population during the holiday season,” said Tony Snell, licensed clinical social worker with the Montana VA’s Homeless & Recovery Program.

“The Recovery team goes above and beyond on a consistent basis to meet the needs of the Veterans,” said Paul Harman, chief of behavioral health for the VA Montana Health Care System.

“They do great work!”

Though food items are collected year-round, identification of families in need began in early November. Meals were distributed starting Monday morning with over half of them picked up at the First Assembly of God. Volunteers delivered 22 meals to various homes in the Helena area well into the afternoon.

Out of the forty-five Veterans receiving meals, sixteen of them live with family members who will also enjoy the meal with them this holiday.

[PHOTOS INCLUDED ON SUBSEQUENT PAGES]

The VA Montana Health Care System serves Veterans across Montana, an area roughly 147,000 square miles in size. Our 47,000 enrolled Veterans are supported with a staff of about 1,200 (over a third are Veterans themselves) spread across 16 locations and 17 facilities including: the Fort Harrison hospital, the Billings Health Care Center, eleven Community Based Outpatient Clinics, two Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinic, the Miles City Community Living Center, and the Helena Sleep Disorders Center . VA Montana is proud of the support it receives from over 500 volunteers and its innovative approach to rural healthcare.

*Media interested in attending this event should contact the **local media contact** indicated. For general inquiries regarding the VA, please contact the VA Montana Health Care System Public Affairs office at Fort Harrison at (406) 447-7303. After hours, call (406) 422-2781 or email mike.garcia@va.gov.*



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Volunteers help count 22 Thanksgiving meals after loading them for delivery to Veterans' homes in the Helena area, Nov. 21. This is an annual event led by the Helena First Assembly of God and the second year the Montana VA, Lewis & Clark Co. Joining Community Forces initiative and other community partners have participated. (Photo courtesy of the Fort Harrison VA Public Affairs Office).



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Denver resident Terenn Tracy poses near 23 full Thanksgiving meals prepared for pickup at the Helena First Assembly of God, Nov. 21. Tracy is the grand-daughter of a VA Recovery Program staff member. Visiting Helena this week for the holidays, she pitched in to help with the effort. This is an annual event led by the Helena First Assembly of God and the second year the Montana VA, Lewis & Clark Co. Joining Community Forces initiative and other community partners have participated. (Photo courtesy of Fort Harrison VA Public Affairs Office).



IMG_2338

Sarah Smith and her grand-daughter, Terenn Tracy, pose after helping load 22 Thanksgiving meals for delivery to Veterans' homes in the Helena area, Nov. 21. Smith is a member of the Montana VA's Homeless & Recovery Program staff. Tracy, a Denver resident, is visiting Helena this week for the holidays and pitched in to help with the effort. This is an annual event led by the Helena First Assembly of God and the second year the Montana VA, Lewis & Clark Co. Joining Community Forces initiative and other community partners have participated. (Photo courtesy of Fort Harrison VA Public Affairs Office).

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