



# *TOGETHER WE CAN*





## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

DAV of Minnesota remains a dominant force in Veteran services in 2023. Thanks to our volunteers, staff, and board members, we have continued the critical work of improving the lives of Veterans across Minnesota through advocacy, special programs and the DAV of Minnesota Foundation. Our guiding light is our mission, to Fulfill Our Promises to the Men and Women Who Served.

**Together we can advocate.** We are committed to ensuring that every Veteran receives the benefits that they have earned and deserve. 2023 was a productive year for Minnesota Veterans at the state and federal levels. Through the dedicated work of our Legislative Director and the Commanders Task Force, we achieved support across the aisle in the last session increasing critical benefits for disabled Veterans. MinnFluence, our new online communication tool, was instrumental in the passage of Minnesota's second Veterans Omnibus Bill.

**Together we can serve each other.** As we approach our Century of Service in 2025, we are in awe at the evolution of services offered to Minnesota Veterans by our organization. In 2023, DAV of Minnesota worked tirelessly to maintain a high level of support to Veterans through our Transportation and Outdoors Programs. DAV of Minnesota's 187 volunteers who accounted for a total of 73% of all Veteran Administration Medical Center Transportation services. From canoe trips to hunting to houseboat trips, our Outdoors Program continued to provide Veterans with a chance to unplug and reconnect with other Veterans, a unique form of therapy for those that participated.

**Together we can build each other up.** Thanks to the DAV of Minnesota Foundation, Minnesota Veterans were able to participate in the National Disabled Veterans Adaptive Sports program, learning how to participate in sports they never thought they'd play again. The Winter, Summer and Golf Sports Clinics focused on those with special needs for adaptive equipment. We are so proud to sponsor this opportunity.

**Together we can reach more Veterans.** DAV of Minnesota focused on building on the chapter strength of the organization. These local programs are creating interest and providing the types of activity diversity that our younger Veterans are seeking. Through television interviews, advertising, and increased social media presence we are raising the profile of our organization and meeting Veterans where they are to further our organization's mission.

Together, we can.

Ellsworth Fields  
Commander  
DAV of Minnesota



## ABOUT US

The Disabled American Veterans Department of Minnesota (DAV of Minnesota) is dedicated to a single purpose: keeping our promise to Minnesota's Veterans. We accomplish this by ensuring that Veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them, fighting for the interests of injured heroes and their caregivers at the Minnesota Legislature, providing employment resources to Veterans and their families, and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of Veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

Made up of 19,000 members and 32 chapters across the state, this organization was built on the concept of "Veterans serving Veterans." Through our network of services, we have led the way since 1925 to provide a lifetime of support for Veterans and their families.

DAV of Minnesota priorities include:

- Providing free, professional assistance to Veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service.
- Outreach about DAV of Minnesota's services to both the overall American public and more specifically, disabled Veterans and their families.
- Representation of the interests of disabled Veterans and their families, including widowed spouses and orphans, before all levels of government.
- Extending DAV's mission of hope into communities through a network of local chapters.
- Providing a variety of opportunities for veterans to serve veterans in one of our many volunteer programs.

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Back Cover DAV of Minnesota Foundation

## EXECUTIVE TEAM



Ellsworth Fields  
Chapter 28  
Department  
Commander



Oather Martin  
Chapter 37  
Senior Vice  
Commander



John Walker  
Chapter 2  
1st Junior  
Vice Commander



Mike Medhaug  
Chapter 37  
2nd Junior  
Vice Commander



Sandi Braunstein  
Chapter 13  
3rd Junior  
Vice Commander



Richard Batcho  
Chapter 38  
4th junior  
Vice Commander



Mick Aguirre  
Chapter 2  
Past Department  
Commander



Rick Jarvis  
Chapter 12  
Judge  
Advocate



Jim Butler  
Chapter 41  
Chaplain



Scott Berndt  
Chapter 39  
Treasurer



Stephen Whitehead  
Chapter 10  
Adjutant

# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## IN THE COMMUNITY

### Thursdays of 1,000 Flags

Expanding brand awareness through community relations was a primary objective in 2023. On the Thursday before Memorial Day, Flag Day, July 4th and Veterans Day, DAV of Minnesota partnered with PT from 102.9 the Wolf “Thunder & PT Morning Show” at its Community Donation Centers in Inver Grove Heights, Anoka, Burnsville, and New Hope to hand out flags and receive donations from generous Minnesotans. These efforts resulted in increased donation traffic, volunteer drivers and new members at each location. From Twins ticket giveaways to visits from St. Paul Saints mascot Mudonna, engaging and thanking our supporters has never been more fun!



### DAV of Minnesota sponsors the 30th National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic in Riverside, Iowa

In September, the DAV and Department of Veterans Affairs co-hosted the 30th National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic. Sponsored by nine DAV Departments (including Minnesota) and chapters and the DAV State Commanders and Adjutants Association, the weeklong adaptive sports clinic empowered Veterans facing the challenges of blindness, amputations, spinal cord injuries and severe brain injuries with the opportunity to golf and try other activities.

### Military Day at the Fair

For the first year ever, DAV of Minnesota sponsored WCCO’s Military Appreciation Day on August 29th at the Minnesota State Fair, and enthusiastic DAV of Minnesota volunteers handed out flags and water bottles to fairgoers. At the place where everything is served on a stick, Adjutant Butch Whitehead presented Drivetime host and foodie Jason DeRusha with an “MRE on a stick” live on the air. Served cold with a Snickerdoodle cookie, the response to the fajita was, “not bad!”

## LEADING FROM THE FRONT IN LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

### Legislative Affairs Director Trent Dilks receives Outstanding Performance in Advocacy Award

At the DAV National Convention in April, Trent Dilks was recognized with the Outstanding Performance in Advocacy award. As the Legislative Director for DAV of Minnesota, he has organized the Veteran legislative agenda, leveraging the Commander’s Task Force to unify seven Minnesota Veteran Service Organizations on Veteran topics. Thanks to his ongoing work, Minnesota passed its second Veterans Omnibus in 2023, ensuring that important pieces of legislation are considered on their own merit by the state legislature.



## 2023-2024 MEMBERSHIP

DAV of Minnesota is made up of 32 chapters across the state that support local Veterans, families and their communities. Independently, chapters work to raise awareness, fundraise, and create programs to fulfill our promises to those who have served in their communities. Together, DAV of Minnesota unites with other Minnesota Veteran Service Organizations to ensure no Veteran is left behind.

Any service member who was not dishonorably discharged and sustained an injury or illness during their time in the military, or anyone who aggravated a previous injury during his or her time in service, is eligible for DAV membership if they served during a period of armed conflict (does not have to be direct combat). The injury and/or illness does not need to be service connected by the VA.

To learn more about becoming a member of the DAV of Minnesota, please visit <https://mydav.org/dav-membership> or contact DAV of Minnesota at 651-291-1212.

*\*Membership numbers current as of December 10, 2023.*

	CHAPTER #	CITY	CURRENT MEMBERS*
Minneapolis Chapter	1	Minneapolis	2,913
St. Paul Chapter	2	St. Paul	1,696
Russo-Golob Chapter	3	Hibbing	243
Cloverleaf Chapter	4	Askov	372
Gilbert W. Nordman Chapter	6	Duluth	901
North Central Chapter	7	Bemidji	660
St. Cloud Chapter	9	St. Cloud	925
Lyle C. Pearson Sr. Chapter	10	Mankato	777
Aitkin Chapter	11	Aitkin	125
Morrison Co. Chapter	12	Little Falls	528
Itasca County Chapter	13	Grand Rapids	463
Crookston Chapter	14	Crookston	194
New Ulm Chapter	15	New Ulm	616
Glaydon Iverson Chapter	16	Albert Lea	241
Washington County Chapter	17	Hugo	303
Carlton County Chapter	18	Carlton	708
Faribault Chapter	20	Faribault	295
Crow Wing County Chapter	22	Brainerd	408
Kolstad Chapter	23	Virginia	412
Western Chapter	24	Montevideo	311
Fergus Falls Chapter	25	Fergus Falls	296
Arnold Brandt Chapter	27	Austin	217
Mayo Southeast Chapter	28	Rochester	1,143
Lakeland Chapter	31	Detroit Lakes	254
South Central Chapter	32	Fairmont	377
Southwest Chapter	33	Marshall	234
West Central Chapter	34	Willmar	233
Hutchinson Chapter	37	Hutchinson	464
Park Rapids Chapter	38	Park Rapids	366
Anoka Chapter	39	Anoka	1,436
South Metro Chapter	40	Apple Valley	161
Northwest Minnesota Chapter	41	Roseau	89
<b>Total, Department of Minnesota</b>			<b>18,892</b>

**VETERANS** 294,232  
BY ERA SERVED STRONG

94,073 Vietnam 

49,199 Gulf (Post-9/11) 

36,803 Gulf (Pre-9/11) 

17,673 Korea 

3,575 WWII 



*The way that Minnesota takes care of its veterans, service members, their families and survivors stands out as one of the best in the nation.*



**Stephen Whitehead**  
Adjutant  
DAV of Minnesota



## TOGETHER WE CAN

In Minnesota, Veterans serve Veterans. It's simply an extension of what was emphasized during military service - to "never leave a fallen comrade." The DAV Department of Minnesota consistently partners with dozens of Minnesota Veteran Service Organizations across the state, including leadership participation on the Commander's Task Force. When Veterans work together, anything is possible. In 2023, the DAV Department of MN participated in many opportunities to assist fellow Minnesota Veterans:

### **Veterans Day on the Hill**

On Mar. 30, 2023, DAV of Minnesota hosted its annual day of advocacy for Minnesota Veterans. Representation from various Veteran Service Organizations joined to present a united front on Capitol Hill. This year's event saw the largest attendance in history with 12 buses and 500+ Veterans in attendance. After a motivating session at Cedar Street Armory, the group marched to rally at the State Capitol to advocate for Veterans' needs to be met "NOW!" Gov. Walz spoke to the group, declaring his support for the successful passage of a second Veteran Omnibus Bill.



### **Summer VetFest, Minneapolis Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center**

In July, the DAV of Minnesota and the Minneapolis VA Medical Center joined forces to promote the Summer Vet Fest, a healthcare fair where veterans of all ages could attend to apply for recently expanded PACT ACT benefits. Lauded as the best event in the region, the staff worked late into the night to ensure that Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals were met.

### **Adjutant gives keynote at State of Minnesota's Veterans Day Event**

On Saturday, November 11, 2023, DAV Department of Minnesota's Adjutant Stephen Whitehead gave the keynote address at the State of Minnesota's Veterans Day Program at the Inver Grove Heights Community Center, hosted by the Military Department of Veterans Affairs. In attendance were Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Representative Ilhan Omar, Inver Grove Heights Mayor Brenda Dietrich and Minnesota National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke. As the leader of one of Minnesota's prominent Veteran Service Organizations, Whitehead's address highlighted how the spirit of service continues to unite Minnesotans to go the extra mile to take care of its Veterans and their families. "I believe that it's because no purpose and no bond is stronger than those forged in service. Whether we know it or not, service is how we've begun to define our lives."

### **Montevideo Chapter 24 Donates Golf Cart to Minnesota Veterans Homes - Montevideo**

In November, the Western MN DAV Chapter 24 donated an electric golf cart to the Minnesota Veterans Home in Montevideo. The golf cart will be used to bring residents to local events at the nearby Montevideo High School sporting events, the adjacent bike path and other community events. This donation is just one example of Veterans serving Veterans across the state, ensuring inclusion for all.

### **Fergus Falls Chapter 25 Donates \$12,000 to Minnesota Veterans Homes - Fergus Falls**

The DAV of Minnesota Chapter 25 in Fergus Falls demonstrated its service to fellow Veterans in October when they donated over \$10,000 to the Fergus Falls Veterans home Wi-Fi and Cable Fund. "The Veterans Home is grateful for the inspiring generosity that members of the local DAV show our Residents in Fergus, said Gary Harris Jr., Public Affairs Officer. This donation will ensure that Veteran Residents have access to their favorite entertainment and news every day.





**MINNFLUENCE**

**SERVING MINNESOTA'S VETERANS**

**What is MinnFluence?**

MinnFluence is a tool to help connect Veterans and their supporters directly with their lawmakers at the state level when important action needs to be taken. It is a local alert network that the DAV of Minnesota can use to let you know when your lawmaker is needed to move forward legislation or when votes happen. It can update you on how your lawmaker voted and can keep you informed throughout the legislative process.

**How does it work?**

When a new MinnFluencer signs up, DAV of Minnesota ensures that you are tracking your State Representative and State Senator's committees and leadership positions. With this information the Department's Legislative Director can track key legislation, and when your Representative or Senator are needed to support a bill, get a hearing, or hold a key vote, DAV of Minnesota will reach out to you so you can amplify the importance of the proposed legislation.

**All are welcome.**

You do not need to be a Veteran to sign up — all are welcome. The MinnFluence Network was already instrumental in the passage of both Veterans Omnibus Bills in Minnesota and if we work together to build a larger network, our power will only grow.

**Featuring the Congressional Scorecard**

As bipartisan advocates for Veterans' rights, it's important to understand which elected officials are supporting DAV of Minnesota legislation. The Congressional Scorecard tool provides these facts, listing all the DAV-supported legislation that Minnesota's elected officials have signed as sponsor or cosponsor. All legislation is listed with links to the bill's language, and how to contact Representatives or Senators. Stay informed with the facts at <https://davmn.org/congressional-scorecard/>.

**2024 LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVES**

**Amend the Property Tax Value Exclusion**

Background: In Minnesota, Disabled Veterans rated 70-, 80-, 90-, or 100-percent (non-permanent and total) are eligible for a \$150,000 property tax value exclusion. DAV of Minnesota has identified multiple gaps and opportunities to enhance this benefit for Minnesota's Disabled Veterans and their surviving spouses.

**Proposals:**

- New language in the law to accomplish allowing surviving spouses to apply regardless of how long it takes for VA and elected officials to recognize their spouse's sacrifice. Presently there is a two-year limit.
- Increase the exclusion to \$200,000 and \$400,000 to reflect increasing home values across the state.
- Remove this language that surviving spouses can transfer the exclusion to a new house, but it is limited to "equal or lesser value."
- Lower the level of eligibility from 70 percent service-connected rating to 50-percent for Veterans to receive some form of exclusion.

**Discounted hunting and fishing licenses for disabled Veterans**

In many states, the service and sacrifice of disabled Veterans is recognized through a free or discounted license for hunting and fishing. In 2024, the DAV of Minnesota is sponsoring legislation that will give this benefit to Minnesota's disabled Veterans as a powerful way to show a continued "thank you," while also encouraging Veterans to seek the healing power of outdoor activities for their physical and mental well-being.

**Tuition Waiver for Children of 70% or Greater Disabled Veterans at Minnesota's Technical and Community Colleges and Universities**

Ensuring access to higher education in a technical, community, or university setting is a benefit that should be extended to the dependents of our Service-Connected Disabled Veterans. This benefit would recognize the sacrifices and challenges that a disabled Veteran's family may go through, while giving an additional benefit for the Veteran in knowing their dependents can pursue education or training in Minnesota at no cost.

**2023 LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Veterans Omnibus Bill passes for second consecutive year**

In 2022, DAV of Minnesota and the Commander's Task Force were able to secure the first Veterans Omnibus Bill in Minnesota's history. In 2023, we found ourselves in a fight to make sure the Veterans Omnibus remained the way that Minnesota passes legislation for its Veterans. Thanks to MinnFluence, the Veteran community and its supporters were able to sway lawmakers into passing the second Veterans Omnibus. This will continue to be a top priority every year.

**Post 9/11 Servicemember Bonus Expands to all Minnesota Veterans**

When the Post 9/11 Servicemember Bonus was passed in 2022, the only Minnesota Veterans eligible to receive it were those who joined and separated as Minnesota residents. In 2023, we fought to change the language to expand eligibility to all Minnesota residents. These changes also included the addition of specific campaign medals previously overlooked in the initial bill.

# TRANSPORTATION

The DAV of Minnesota Transportation Program provides free transportation to Veterans in Minnesota to attend their VA medical appointments at four medical centers and at community-based clinics. The program has 38 vehicles stationed in 20 communities.

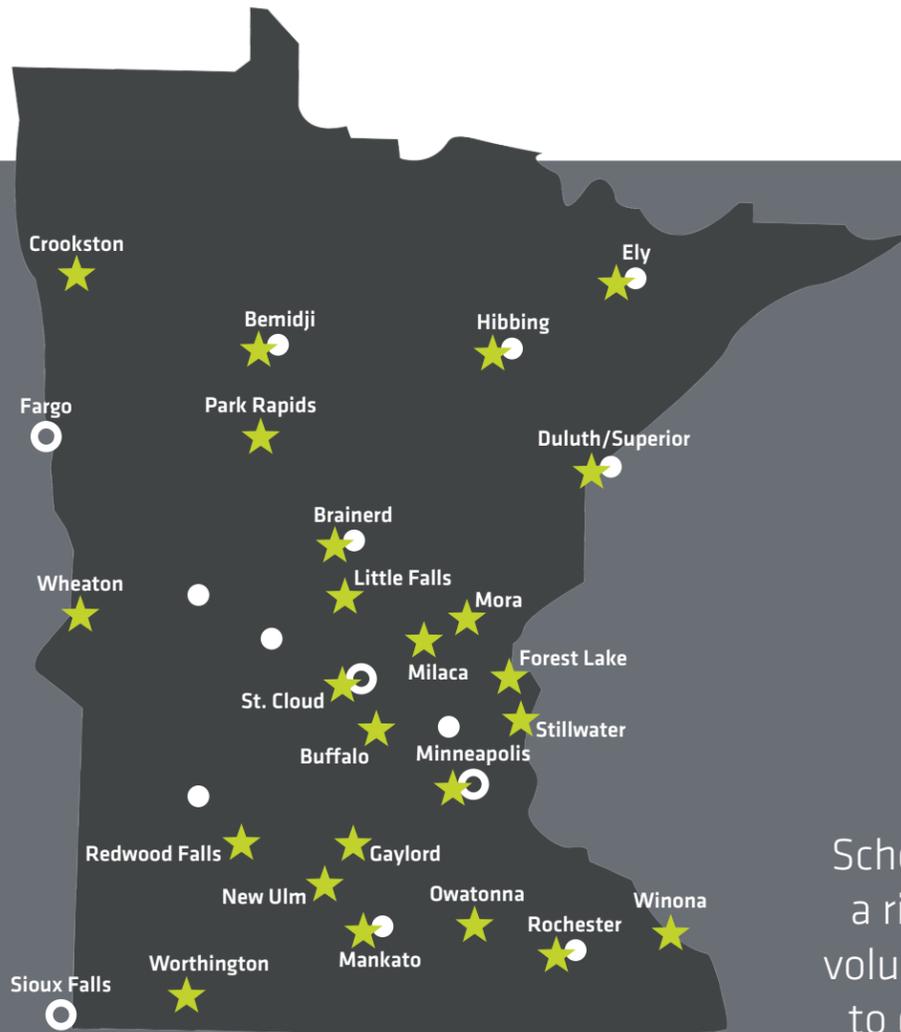
2023 brought improvements to the program both for the Veterans and volunteer drivers. They include:

- Three fleet vehicles that reached end-of-life were replaced with one Ford Transit and two Honda CRVs.
- Four volunteer drivers were honored for their service at the DAV Fall Conference.

The DAV of Minnesota is proud of the critical connection their volunteer drivers provide to Veterans they drive. This connection not only provides life-saving transportation, but also the benefit of a welcoming gateway into the VA system.

**Metro Program Snapshot**  
The DAV of Minnesota Transportation Program offered to the Metro area has 70 volunteers. In 2023, they drove over 10,000 miles transporting nearly 8,000 Veterans!

VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY RATING	NUMBER OF RIDERS (%)	AGE RANGE	AVERAGE AGE
100%	157 (18%)	23-100	68
50-100%	137 (16%)	26-98	72
<50%	301 (35%)	34-100	76
Not service-connected	274 (31%)	36-97	75



- ★ DAV Vehicles
- VA Medical Centers
- VA Community Clinics

- Metro**  
612-467-2768
- Central Minnesota**  
320-252-1670 ext. 6676
- Northeast Minnesota**  
218-204-0693 or  
715-398-2406
- Northwest Minnesota**  
855-277-9787
- Southeast Minnesota**  
507-703-1139

Schedule a ride or volunteer to drive.



**172**  
current/active  
volunteer drivers

Metro **70**  
Central Minnesota **37**  
Northeast Minnesota **15**  
Northwest Minnesota **3**  
Southeast Minnesota **15**

## VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

172 volunteers helped sustain DAV of Minnesota's Transportation program in 2023. Without their commitment to serving our Veterans, we would not be able to continue this essential service. The transportation volunteer team gave 41,717 hours and transported 21,645 Veterans to and from their VA or VA-scheduled medical appointments across the state.

**Not all wounds are visible**  
DAV of Minnesota's Transportation Program has consistently been a leader and trailblazer in the nation. Our "driving billboards" stand out on the road! In 2023, the focus for our vehicle wraps is on the mission to end Veteran suicide. According to the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, the suicide rate for Veterans is 57.3% higher than non-Veteran U.S. adults. New 2023 vehicle wrap designs promote the Veteran Crisis Line. DAV of Minnesota vehicle will carry this important message to every corner of the state, bringing awareness to this important issue and the resources available to combat it.

Additionally, the DAV of Minnesota fleet has created vehicle wraps to showcase and honor Navy Veterans. The U.S. Navy is the first in a "branch of service series" to be highlighted by the organization.



## 2023 TRANSPORTATION FIGURES



**901,886**  
Miles driven  
by volunteer drivers



**21,645**  
Veterans  
transported



**41,717**  
Hours invested by  
volunteer drivers



**\$1,704,618**  
Estimated cost savings  
to the VA

## OUTDOOR PROGRAM

The DAV of Minnesota Outdoors Program believes that there is nothing better for a Veteran's heart and soul than getting them outside to enjoy nature and the camaraderie of fellow Veterans. The program had a great year hosting trips from the lakes of Canada and Minnesota and south to Texas to immerse Veterans in fishing, hunting, and the outdoors.

These trips included an impactful houseboat trip to Rainy Lake. Following the houseboat, Veterans were able to make a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Cliff Lake, Ontario, to chase walleye, musky, and deep lake trout. The next stop was Lake Winnibigoshish where the Veterans caught walleyes for several days in Williams Narrows. Once the summer season was finished, Veterans made a long road trip to Texas to hunt the destructive feral hog.

Cold weather doesn't stop the hearty Minnesota Veteran. Donning their cold weather gear, the Veterans went from warm days on the boat to chilly days on the ice. No matter the temperature, bringing a group of people together with shared experiences and hobbies is what makes the DAV of Minnesota Outdoor Program so unique.

### Cliff Lake

With changing weather, 12 Veterans took to the boats at Cliff Lake Lodge on Cliff Lake in Ontario, Canada. The group caught several types of fish over the five-day trip. The comradery didn't stop after all the fish were caught, it just continued into the night through fish fries and bonfires at the edge of the lake.

### Texas Hog Hunt

Minnesota Veterans took to the stand in Texas to hunt feral hogs. Several hogs were dispatched and taken for the meat. In between the planned hunts, Veterans spent time fishing and enjoying other outdoor activities.

## HOUSEHOLD DONATIONS

The primary source of revenue for DAV of Minnesota is generated from the collection and wholesale of household donations, and both the statewide chapters and the department benefit from this commitment. Through collection boxes throughout Greater Minnesota, clothing drives, and Twin Cities residential collection, the DAV of Minnesota team schedules pick-ups, deliveries, and distribution to our commercial partners.

In 2023, clothing and household item donations allowed for the repurposing of over 8.2 million pounds of unused or unwanted items and provided nearly \$4.1 million dollars in funding for DAV of Minnesota chapter and department activities, programs, and services.

Making a donation is easy.



Schedule curbside pickup online at [donatedavmn.org](https://donatedavmn.org)

Drop off at the nearest collection location. Find locations at [donatedavmn.org](https://donatedavmn.org)

By phone, call **651-487-2002** or **1-855-789-0993**

Email the donation program at [donate@davmn.org](mailto:donate@davmn.org)

## 2023 REVENUE AND EXPENSES

In 2023, DAV of Minnesota invested \$0.79 of every dollar into Veterans services in Minnesota. We are proud that money coming into DAV of Minnesota goes back to Veterans in need.

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Contributions	\$34,790	\$105,910	\$140,700
Grants	\$117,968	-	\$117,968
National service allocation	\$110,203	-	\$110,203
Registration and fees	\$24,537	-	\$24,537
In-kind contributions	\$51,302	-	\$51,302
Other income	\$2,593	-	\$2,593
Gain/(Loss) on sale of property and equipment	\$388	-	\$388
Net assets released from restriction	\$101,910	(\$101,910)	-
<b>Total revenue and support before enterprise operations</b>	<b>\$469,176</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$473,176</b>
Gross income from enterprise operations	\$4,091,282	-	\$4,091,282
Gross expenses from enterprise operations	(\$2,464,135)	-	(\$2,464,135)
<b>Net income from enterprise operations</b>	<b>\$1,627,147</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,627,147</b>
<b>Total revenue and support</b>	<b>\$1,759,080</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$2,100,323</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Program services			
Veterans' services	\$1,097,456	-	\$1,097,456
Transportation network	\$553,336	-	\$553,336
<b>Total program services expenses</b>	<b>\$1,650,792</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,650,792</b>
Management and general expenses	\$430,829	-	\$430,829
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$2,081,621</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,081,621</b>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	<b>\$14,702</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$18,702</b>
Net assets, beginning of year	\$1,804,297	\$10,500	\$1,814,797
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$1,818,999</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,833,499</b>



**2023**  
**HOUSEHOLD DONATIONS**

Primary source of revenue for DAV of Minnesota



**8,200,000**

Pounds of unwanted items repurposed



**\$4,091,282**

In funding for DAV of Minnesota



**Disabled American Veterans of Minnesota**

State Veterans Service Building, Floor 3  
20 West 12th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-291-1212

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[davn.org](http://davn.org)