



**Washington Commission for National and
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**Washington Department of Veterans Affairs Receives AmeriCorps Grants to Help
Veterans Give Back In Their Communities**

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) was awarded \$252,000 from the Washington Commission for National and Community Service to implement a new AmeriCorps program. The Veterans Corps will engage twenty-seven ‘VetCorps’ members in a one-year pilot program serving veterans, soldiers and their families,

“This unique program promises to use service as a strategy to assist veterans who have sacrificed so much for us,” said Bill Basl, Executive Director of the Washington Commission for National and Community Service.

The VetCorps will tap the knowledge, skills and abilities of veterans by engaging them in AmeriCorps national service positions which will enable them to make a positive difference in their community and improve their quality of life as a civilian. Examples of service assignments include working with soldiers recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries by engaging them in volunteer opportunities to utilize service to others as an aid in recovery. VetCorps members will also partner with soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion by promoting community-based activities to meet the needs of military families while a family member is deployed.

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In addition, WDVA has been awarded a second AmeriCorps grant from the Employment Security Department's Washington Service Corps to create the Veteran Navigator program. Through this new program, AmeriCorps members will be assigned to local colleges and universities to help veterans navigate the higher education system, organize veterans clubs and engage veterans and other students in community service projects.

"These grants are a wonderful opportunity to establish partnerships and open up volunteer opportunities within our communities," said Mark Fischer, Program Manager for the WDVA Veterans Conservation Corps. "Volunteerism is an attribute shared by many veterans so the VetCorps and Veteran Navigators are a perfect fit and a great way for our veterans to get involved."

Since 2005, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs has operated a Veterans Conservation Corps which engages veterans, coping with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or war trauma issues, in habitat restoration projects. Veterans benefit by completing hands-on projects, the first step for some veterans seeking to return to work. Washington's rivers and coastlines have benefited from more than 6,000 volunteer hours, resulting in the restoration of habitat areas needed for fish and wildlife. The AmeriCorps Grants will be an extension of this program and provide a monthly stipend and scholarship at the conclusion of their ten month commitment.

For information on how to get involved in the VetCorps or Veteran Navigator programs, contact Mark Fischer at markf@dva.wa.gov or 360-725-2224.

AmeriCorps funding is awarded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation engages four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.

For more information on AmeriCorps, visit us online at:
Washington Commission for National and Community Service,
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