

## **Veteran Connection, Service and Community**

Over the past eighteen months as Warren County Coordinator, I have had the privilege of working with hundreds of veterans and their families-listening to their stories, navigating challenges, celebrating milestones, and strengthening connections across our county. This role has been both humbling and deeply meaningful, reinforcing every day why serving those who served matters.

During this time, I have assisted nearly 400 veterans in their VA claims, county and state programs, transportation, housing stability, healthcare, and mental health resources. Each interaction-whether brief or ongoing-represents trust, resilience, and a shared commitment to ensuring no veteran feels alone.

### **Building Partnerships That Strengthen Our Community**

The progress of the past year and half has been made possible through the collaboration with veteran service organizations, community partners, and public safety professionals. I am grateful to work in the Division of Aging and Disabilities Service office and alongside local American Legion Posts, Rolling Thunder Chapters, VFW Posts, and Veterans Haven North, Community Hope, State Police and Warren County Law Enforcement agencies. Strong relationships with, Habitat for Humanity, Operation Chill Out, the War Memorial Committee, housing and rehabilitation centers and our high schools, technical school and colleges-all united in supporting veterans where they are.

### **Honoring Service and Legacy**

One of the most rewarding aspects of this role has been honoring service across generations. I had the privilege of assisting with the Warren County Distinguished Service Medal Ceremony, recognizing 48 deserving veterans. Equally meaningful has been planning 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations and respectful funerals for our World War II veterans-true hometown heroes whose lives shaped the freedoms we enjoy today. These moments are living history lessons that bring families and communities together.

### **Supporting the Next Generation of Service Members**

Our mission also includes those preparing to serve. In 2025, we made strong progress with Our Community Salutes, (OCS), culminating in a scheduled 2026 recognition ceremony for all Warren County high-school recruits. In partnership with Fleet Reserve Association #115, (FRA #115), and Warren County Technical School, we launched a Northwest Chapter of OCS-to honor seniors choosing military service after graduation. This event is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, 2026 AT THE Warren County Technical School. Any business considering sponsoring the event is encouraged to reach out to FRA #115.

### **A Strong Start to 2026**

The momentum continues into 2026. I spoke to more than 125 attendees at the January Warren County AARP meeting and joined local leaders and new VFW Commander for the opening ceremony of the Ronald Wildrick Jr. VFW Post 12246 in Knowlton. Spc. Wildrick lost his life in the Kunar province of Afghanistan in December of 2011.

### **Mark your Calendars**

Please join us for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Military Family Expo, April 16, 2026 at the Belvidere Manor. This event brings together resources, services, and community partners to support veterans and their families. Last year, more than 70 vendors participated, offering assistance with employment, healthcare, VA Claims, mental health services, and more-along with local veteran organizations and veteran-owned businesses.

Serving in this role has been both a pleasure-and an honor. I look forward to continuing this work and hope to see you all at the Belvidere Manor on April 16<sup>th</sup> for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Military Family Expo!