



The key to a successful transition is a strong social support system to rely on



2019

Annual Report



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Photo: Chicago Veterans Annual BBQ



Photo: Brunch at the Ball Park



# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Karen Hernandez**

Executive Director  
Chicago Veterans

Dear Friends,

It is my honor to present Chicago Veterans' 2019 Annual Report. This year's report highlights the agency's significant achievements in helping Veterans reintegrate into their communities and build a strong support system while fostering a healthy and vibrant Veteran community.

I'm very proud of the work we've done here. Also, I am honored to work with wonderfully smart community partners who understand deeply the values that guide this organization. We strive to do truly meaningful work for our communities, finding thoughtful, effective, and innovative ways to support Veterans and other organizations to facilitate change.

We have provided important stewardship across a host of issues, from individual preparedness to business development, from supporting access to the arts to helping our government leadership adopt new standards for providing support to Veterans. Our effectiveness, in part, is due to the mutually respectful relationships we have forged with our colleagues in government, community, and philanthropy.

As you read this annual report, we hope it will remind you of our recent successes and energize you for the future as you envision the mission of Chicago Veterans in 2020. For those of you who have tirelessly committed time and energy to the success of this organization, I thank you. For the many of you who are new, I welcome you to our Chicago Veterans family. I look forward to working with all of you in 2020!



Photo: Chicago Veterans Ruck March



# OUR MISSION

Chicago Veterans empowers military Veterans to take control of their transition throughout life.

Empowerment is based on the idea that providing Veterans access to seminars, information, and resources, as well as consistent social networking opportunities, will help build a stronger social support system for Veterans that will improve their mental and emotional well-being and lead to a successful transition.



Photo: Liberty Call Event

## OUR PROGRAMS



### SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

SCIP provides consistent local opportunities for Veterans to engage and interact with their community to help avoid isolation and build a positive social support system for challenging times.



### EDUCATIONAL PEER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

EPMP provides Individual and Group mentorship. We help connect Veterans who have lived through a specific experience with Veterans who are new to that experience. Group mentorship is provided through workshops, seminars, and other group events.



### EMPLOYMENT READINESS PROGRAM

ERP focuses on creating pipelines to careers for Veterans through direct access to local employers helping mitigate hiring barriers that Veterans face. We also provide resume assistance, mock interviews, workshops, and employment/hiring fairs.



Photo: Chicago Veterans Soccer League

# OUR IMPACT

Chicago Veterans provides consistent opportunities for Veterans to connect, network, learn, and build a positive social support system within their local communities. A support system allows Veterans to seek guidance, transitional assistance as well as provide a community of support in challenging times.

This year, Chicago Veterans has expanded its programs to reach even more Veterans by providing a broader range of events and activities focused on educational seminars, physical activities, employment fairs, family-focused events, community volunteer opportunities, and more. These events and activities allow Veterans to expand their network, access resources and grow as individuals.

**9450+**

TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS

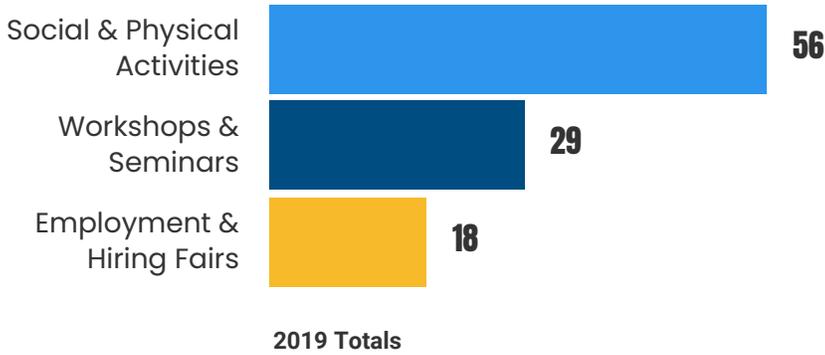
**100+**

TOTAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

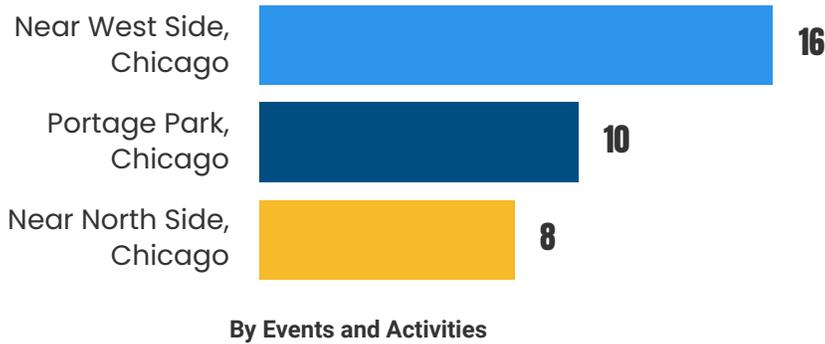
**37+**

CHICAGOLAND COMMUNITIES

## Total Events & Activities



## Largest Communities Served



## Events & Activities Chicago Map

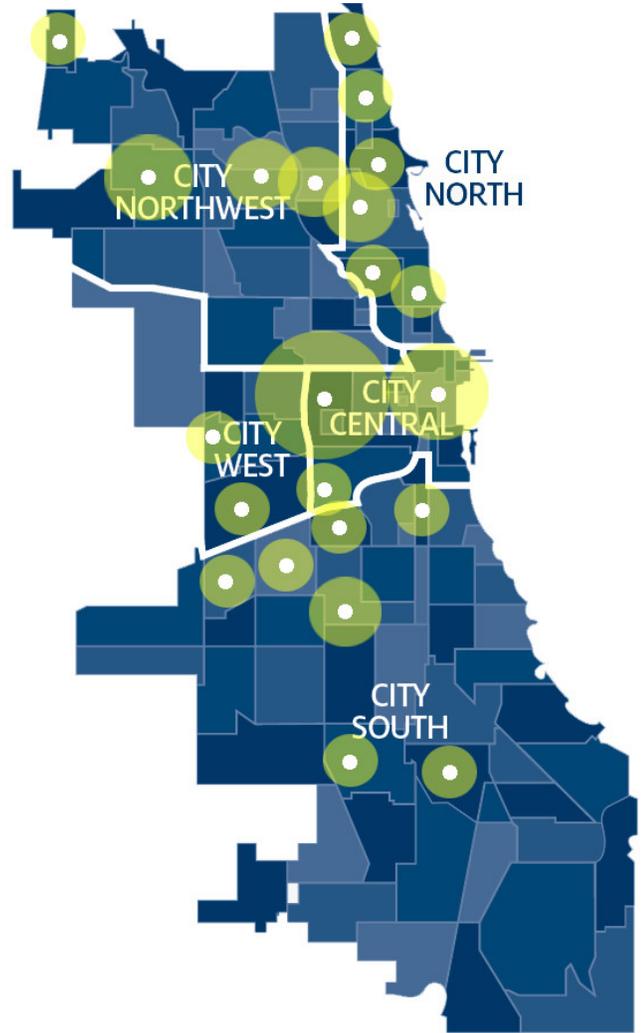


Photo: Chicago Veterans Dragon Boat Team

# OUR ANNUAL & RECURRING EVENTS

## Chicago Veterans Liberty Call

This is the event that started it all. Our Liberty Call events were the first events we hosted as an organization. Since 2014, we have hosted over 50 Liberty Calls all around Chicago and the suburbs.

Our Liberty Calls are held monthly and provide an opportunity for Veterans to connect, network, learn, and more importantly to get out of their homes and into their communities with fellow service members. Each month we invite/partner with a different organization or employer to speak on their company/organization.



## Chicago Veterans Art Initiative

Our annual Chicago Veterans Art Initiative is an opportunity for Veteran artists as well as art enthusiasts to come together and express their feelings and emotions through art. Many Veterans turn to art as a way of therapy and this event allows them to showcase their work.

“ Chicago Veterans gave me the confidence to showcase my art. Their event was the first time I displayed my art and I can say I never would have thought I would have ended up doing this. I have since sold art and even won a Veteran art competition. ”

Steve - US Navy Veteran



## 5th Annual Chicago Veterans Ball

Our Chicago Veterans Ball started with a vision in 2015 of bringing together all military Veterans in the Chicagoland area from every branch to celebrate Veterans Day as one community.

Chicago Veterans held their 5th annual Chicago Veterans Ball during Veterans Day weekend featuring ceremonial cake cutting, colors, community awards, dinner, dancing, and more. This year was our largest Veterans Ball yet with over 400 attendees from different eras and all military branches.

**“ I am extremely grateful Chicago Veterans hosts their annual Ball. My wife never experienced an Air Force Ball due to my deployments. Chicago Veterans allows my wife and I to relive that feeling of unity and pride of service. We know that at least once a year we put all our worries to the side, get to dress up, reserve our hotel room, and celebrate being a Veteran family, together. ”**

Michael - Army Veteran

# Chicago Veterans Ruck March

Every Friday before Memorial Day, Veterans, family members, and friends from all over the United States come together to walk 20 miles from Glencoe Illinois to Chicago to honor and remember the service members we lost at home and on the battlefield.

The 20-mile hike through Chicago represents the 20 Veterans we lose every single day to suicide. Our goal is to honor our fallen brothers and sisters by raising as much awareness as possible around PTSD and the Veteran suicide epidemic through our Chicago Veterans Ruck March.

2019 was our largest Ruck March yet with over 2,700 registered attendees and more than 300 volunteers.

**“Suicide is real in our [Veterans] community. I know, because I have contemplated it as well. Seeing thousands of Veterans and supporters walk to raise awareness is extremely powerful. Events like these are what keeps me alive, knowing that I am not alone and I have a community of support I can turn to.”**

Carlos - USMC Veteran



# 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

## Warrior Week Chicago

Warrior Week Chicago is a week-long series of events hosted by Chicago Veterans and partner Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) designed to highlight programs, services, and resources available to Veterans and their families within the Chicagoland area.

Each day, Warrior Week Chicago focuses on a specific need to help a Veteran transition to civilian life successfully such as employment, personal development, and physical health.



## Chicago Veterans Hiring Fair

Typical hiring fairs are held during the week between the hours of 11am-4pm. Many Veterans have expressed interest in a weekend hiring fair due to their schedules. So on Sunday, November 17th we held our very own evening Chicago Veterans Hiring Fair to help maximize attendance and participation. Featuring over 30 employees and 200+ registered Veterans.



## Resume Building and Mock Interview Workshops

Our Resume Building and Mock Interview Workshops help Veterans prepare for the next steps in their new careers after the military. We have recruiters from various industries available to answer questions, speak about what they look for in a candidate, practice mock interviews, and help Veterans build their resumes.



## Family Night at the Chicago Bulls Game

Chicago Veterans partnered with the Chicago Bulls to host a Veteran Family event at the United Center. We had over 120 attendees and our own designated section at the United Center. All kids received popcorn and a drink as well as the opportunity to be on the court with the players during the playing of the National Anthem.

“My husband had an opportunity to finally get out of the house and meet some new Veterans in our community. My husband and I both served in the military and we love the fact that there are veteran events where my kids can enjoy with us. Raquel - US Army Veteran”





## Brunch at the Ball Park

The Chicago White Sox invited us for a family day of Bruch and fun at the Ball Park. Over 160 Veterans and their families spent an afternoon at Guaranteed Rate Field, where the White Sox had an array of activities for everyone including face painting, balloon making, games, crafts, basketball, a DJ, giveaways, and even a book bag full of school supplies for all the kids.

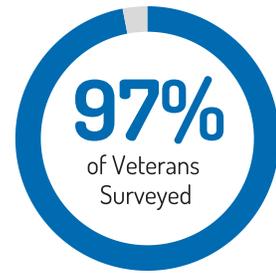
Veterans also had the opportunity to tour the whole stadium, walk on the field, visit the dugouts, and even checked out the locker rooms.

## Chicago Veterans BBQ

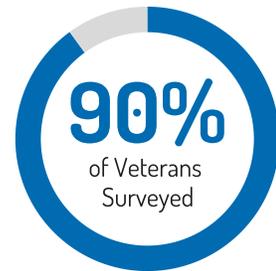
Each year since 2015, Chicago Veterans host an Annual BBQ inviting all family and friends to an afternoon of food, music, games, and fun including, volleyball, a bouncy house for kids, and water activities. We select a different park around Chicago each year to allow Veterans from every neighborhood to join us.

This year we held our BBQ at McKinley Park in Chicago with over 200 attendees enjoying an afternoon of fun and sun.

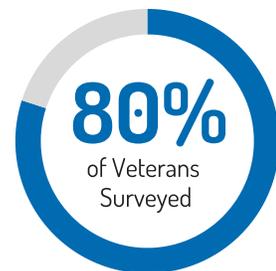
# IMPACT SURVEY



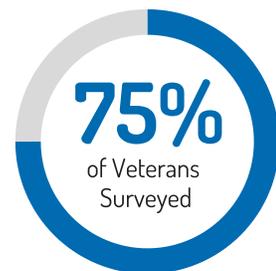
97% of Veterans surveyed said they plan on returning for next years Ruck March.



90% of Veterans surveyed feel more empowered to participate or volunteer in future Chicago Veteran events.



80% of Veterans surveyed said the Ruck March helped them meet someone new.

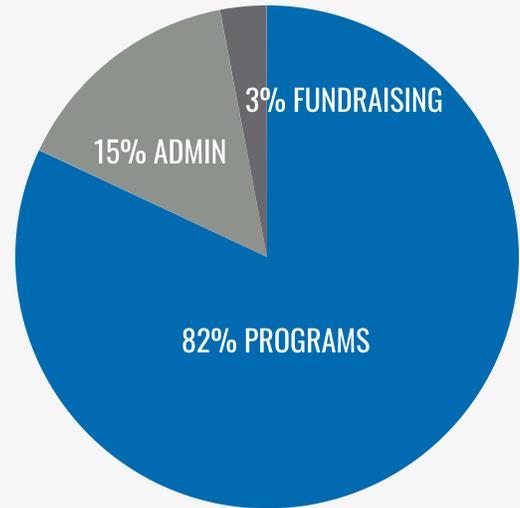


75% of Veterans surveyed said events such as our Chicago Veterans Ball helps them with depression and feeling less down.

# FINANCIALS: 2019



## TOTAL EXPENSE RATIO 2019



REVENUE: 2019	
Contributions	\$199,357
Sponsor	\$11,730
Grants	\$1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$212,087</b>

EXPENSES: 2019	
Program	\$175,111
Administration	\$31,448
Fundraising	\$5,609
<b>Total</b>	<b>212,168</b>

# DONORS AND PARTNERS



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kevin Barszcz	Jose Campos	Jac Charlier
Karina Lopez	Donna Manella	Noel Rivera
Domonicque Tatum	Jessica Rose Wallace	Nestor Zavala





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