

We Get You

**You served your
country, both
at home and
overseas. Now the
Santa Clara County
Veteran Services
Office is here to
serve you.**

INSIDE: Find out why connecting with the VSO makes our community stronger.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY VSO: BY THE NUMBERS

- The **Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO)** is a county- and state-funded agency that helps Veterans and active duty servicemen and women and their spouses, dependents, and survivors file claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation and benefits.
- The Santa Clara County VSO has been in existence since **1944**.
- In 2017, the VSO served more than **6,195** clients in Santa Clara County.
- In FY 2016-17, the compensation and pension claims awarded to county Veterans, servicemen and women and their families totaled more than **\$171 million**.
- The average award per claimant was **\$18,399**.
- Individuals in Santa Clara County can schedule an appointment with a Veteran Services Representative by calling the VSO at **408-918-4980**.

Source: Santa Clara County VSO and the 2018 California Association of County Veterans Service Officers annual report



'We've Been There'

Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office offers claims assistance for Veterans, by Veterans

Marion Moses still recalls meeting one of her first clients at the Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO) where she is director.

A friend had suggested that the client, a Veteran who served three tours of duty in Vietnam, visit the VSO to see if he qualified for any Veterans benefits, Moses says.

"He came in, and he was rough and gruff and grumpy and didn't really know why he was here and didn't really want to be here," Moses recalls.

After several meetings, however, Moses says she discovered that her client indeed had a claim, so she helped him submit the required paperwork to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Eventually, the VA granted his compensation claim.

"He was happy," says Moses. "His whole demeanor changed."

The Santa Clara County VSO is a county- and state-funded agency that offers free assistance to Veterans, active-duty servicemen and women and their families as they navigate the complex VA claims process. Specifically, Veteran Services Representatives help clients track down service records and other critical documents and fill out applications needed to file for various compensation and benefit claims with the VA.

"We help Veterans navigate the jungle that is the claims process, down to the point where all they have to do is sign the paperwork," Moses says.

The representatives inform their clients of all of the benefits and services that are available, including medical and disability benefits, vocational rehabilitation services, dependent and survivor benefits, and college tuition fee waivers.

Moses says that because most Veteran Services Representatives are either Veterans themselves or come from military families, they can sympathize with what their clients experienced during and after active service.

"It's our job to understand what these Veterans have gone through, and to understand what conditions they suffer from



Marion Moses, Director of the Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office, makes it her job to help Veterans get the benefits they have earned.

PHOTO BY LIPO CHING

now and how it could be related to their service," says Moses, a former Sergeant First Class who served more than 15 years in the Army.

Moses encourages Veterans to visit the VSO and file for services like health care benefits as soon as possible — even if they think they are perfectly healthy — rather than waiting years after their service ends. Otherwise, a Veteran could incur costly, out-of-pocket medical expenses that the VA would have covered.

Moses credits the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors for its support of the VSO since she became the director in 2016.

"They increased my staffing and budget and gave me the resources needed to better manage the program," she says.

One reason for the Board's support: Supporting Veterans means

strengthening our community. In the fiscal year 2016-17, the VA disability amount of compensation and pension dollars that came into Santa Clara County alone totaled more than \$171 million, according to the 2018 California Association of County Veterans Service Officers annual report.

"That was \$171 million spent in Santa Clara County by Veterans who live and play here, shop here, pay property taxes and buy homes here."

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We help Veterans navigate the jungle that is the claims process, down to the point where all they have to do is sign the paperwork.

Marion Moses

Director, Santa Clara County
Veteran Services Office

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Anthony Martino served two deployments to Afghanistan with the California Army National Guard, but needed help gaining access to Veterans Affairs health care benefits — help he received from the Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office.

PHOTO BY LIPO CHING



'Why I'm Connected'

Veteran of the war in Afghanistan glad he sought help from VSO

After 18 years of military service, most of them in the California Army National Guard, and two nine-month deployments to Afghanistan, Anthony Martino says he decided in 2017 to retire from the military.

Upon returning home to San Jose last June, he got a referral to the Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO) to determine if he qualified for Veterans benefits.

"I didn't really know where to start," Martino says.

When Martino arrived at the VSO, he says Director Marion Moses, an Army Veteran herself, helped him review all of his options.

Martino, a 48-year-old project manager for Santa Clara County, says he visited the VSO particularly to learn more about the health care benefits available to him. That is because during his years of service, he sustained some injuries to his knees, and he wanted to see if he qualified for medical benefits so he could schedule a checkup.

"She was very informative and welcoming," says Martino. "I found out what forms to fill out and which ones to

bring with me to the VA hospital, and she told me to be sure to bring my service records."

Martino says he especially likes that a lot of the Veteran Services Representatives like Moses understand the challenges of military service.

"A lot of the representatives were vets themselves," says Martino, "or their family had been in the military, so they understood exactly what I was talking about when I told about an issue, and they were very attentive."

Martino, who enjoys hunting, fishing and riding his Harley in his free time, says it surprised him to learn how many benefits he qualified for and that he could receive treatment at a VA hospital free of charge for life — information he wouldn't have known if he didn't connect with the VSO.

"Whether you're in the military still, or if you're leaving or already out, go to the Santa Clara County VSO," says Martino. "They'll set you in the right direction and give you all of the tools and information you need to obtain those benefits."

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Anthony Martino

California Army National Guard
Veteran

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BENEFITS AND SERVICES

Ex-servicemen and women, military personnel and their families may be eligible for many federal and state Veterans benefits and services. Those benefits and services include:

- Disability compensation
- Pension claims
- Special monthly compensation
- Burial benefits
- Death pensions
- Dependent's or survivor's benefits
- Appeal of VA decisions
- Health care enrollment applications
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Education benefits
- The California College Fee Waiver program
- Requests for military records
- Discharge upgrades
- Santa Clara County Veteran ID cards
- Information and referral assistance
- Local resources and outreach

To find out more or to discuss eligibility requirements about any of these benefits, contact the Santa Clara County VSO. Call 408-918-4980 for an appointment or visit www.sccgov.org and search for "Veteran Services." The VSO office is at 68 N. Winchester Blvd., in Santa Clara and is open from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

COMMISSION COLLABORATES WITH OTHER GROUPS TO ADDRESS VETERANS' NEEDS

In Santa Clara County, Veterans groups are teaming up to help ex-servicemen and women and their families beat problems like poverty, homelessness and inadequate health care.

Overseeing the effort is the **Veterans Commission of Santa Clara County**, a body consisting of seven commissioners appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. Retired naval officer and San Jose resident Francis McVey is the commission chairman.

As part of a new effort, the Commission is collaborating with Veterans groups and county agencies like the **Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO)** to help the nonprofit organization Know A Vet develop an information sharing system. The idea, says McVey, is to encourage organizations to share data and work together to assist Veterans.

"By having this network and us sharing data with each other," says McVey, "if any one of the nonprofits, government agencies or Veterans' posts hears of a problem that a vet is having, we can get them to the right resource. I think this is going to be a major information and data network where the partners are working together."

McVey says that in the past, the Commission mainly focused on supporting the National Guard and various Reserve units with their recruitment efforts. "We're supporting other groups like the United Veterans Council and the Blue Star Moms. We are now much more focused on partnering with other organizations," he says.

The Commission also oversees the VSO and reports back to the **Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors**. McVey says getting a great director at the VSO and the Commission helping to increase the VSO budget and staffing are certainly major accomplishments.

McVey says the relationship between this county commission and this VSO is among the best in the state. McVey said these partnerships will lead to greater awareness of Veterans' issues throughout the county.

"Now the Commission is allowed to participate in the events of other organizations ... whether it's the parade, job fairs, Memorial Day events," he says. "So now we'll be more involved in those kinds of community outreach to the greater Veterans community."

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

Navy Veteran Francis McVey served during Vietnam and the Cold War. He continues to serve by volunteering to organize the annual San Jose Veterans Day Parade.

PHOTO BY LIPO CHING

A Century of Honor

**Veterans Day parade will
commemorate the 100th anniversary
of the end of World War I**

Every year on November 11, the city of San Jose hosts a Veterans Day parade to honor those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces through the decades, from World War II to the pre- and post-Gulf War conflicts.

And every year for the past 20 years, San Jose resident Francis McVey, a retired naval flight officer who served during Vietnam and the Cold War, says he has participated in that Veterans Day parade, an event organized by the United Veterans Council (UVC).

The Veterans Day parade features armored vehicles, local high school marching bands, ROTC cadets and 80 cars, including the one McVey drives to transport the grand marshal. Watching the people along the parade route cheer and wave always gives McVey a good feeling.

"The reaction of the people is really rewarding," he says. "They're having such a good time and hopefully also learning some things."

Veterans Day has its roots back in 1918 when the Allied forces in World War I signed an armistice agreement with Germany to cease fire on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. The next year, in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation to memorialize November 11 as Armistice Day, a time to

recognize those who fought and died in the war. Then, in 1954, the United States changed the holiday's name to Veterans Day to recognize those who served in every U.S. war.

McVey says the theme for this year's parade is "A Century of Honoring Those Who Served."

Service is the UVC's mission. The UVC, founded in 1922, is a "nonpolitical and nonsectarian organization" consisting of delegates from American Legion posts and other Veterans groups around Santa Clara County. Besides organizing the Veterans Day parade for nearly 100 years, the UVC also supports the patriotic events of the other Veteran organizations as well as programs that aim to help Veterans in need.

"I like to think that Veterans continue to serve throughout their lives," says McVey, "by being good citizens in the community and volunteering."

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Francis McVey

Veterans Day Parade organizer
with United Veterans Council



San Jose Veterans Day Parade is from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 11, 2018. The parade begins at Highway 87 at Santa Clara Street east down Santa Clara Street right onto Market Street, and ends at San Carlos Street.

Getting Back Into the Real World

VSO helps a Vietnam Veteran find peace



Vietnam Veteran Gary Roberts said going to the Veteran Services Office was the turning point in getting help for PTSD.
PHOTO BY LIPO CHING

“

The Veteran Services Office is a **great place** to find a brighter future.

Gary Roberts

Vietnam Veteran, VSO client

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Gary Roberts spent his tour in Vietnam deep in the jungle looking for the enemy — the 21-year-old pathfinder's job was search, destroy and avoid being ambushed.

Those jungle missions would last decades.

“Years and years after my tour I was constantly thinking about the war,” he says.

Those thoughts ate at him and changed him and made him angry.

“I had issues adjusting to life,” he says. He tried to push the anger away, to mask it. “I was totally doing every drug I could get my hands on.”

Of course, that didn't work. It cost him two marriages and forced him into early retirement from his job with the San Jose Department of Transportation. “I had more and more trouble with authority. Seemed like every day I was getting angry with my boss.”

The end for the Veteran struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) finally came. “I dragged myself to the Veteran Services Office,” he says. “I figured it would be cheaper than going to a private shrink.” And better than dying.

Immediately, he knew he made the right choice when he walked into the Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO). “I went in to talk to them and the woman I spoke to used the words ‘my vets’ when she talked about their services,” he says. “I loved that terminology — that meant she was focusing on me.”

Making that connection with the VSO, its staff and its services put the former pathfinder on the right path.

After interviewing him, the VSO filed a claim on Roberts' behalf. Within months he received a response: 100 percent disability.

After years of suffering alone, Roberts learned a valuable lesson — there are people who care and want to help Veterans, it just takes reaching out.

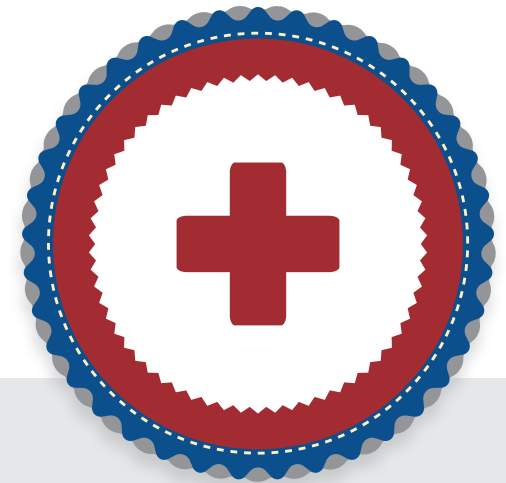
“The Veteran Services Office is a great place to connect with Veterans services,” he says. “It is a great place to find a brighter future.”

Roberts recognizes many Veterans may be hesitant to visit a VSO because of a past bad experience.

“I would tell other Veterans not to get discouraged about visiting the VSO,” he says. “They are doing great work over there.”

Roberts still hears from the VSO about once a month, he explained. They call to talk about services and they help him with any VA correspondence he receives.

“The Veteran Services Office makes life easier,” he says.



PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

Veterans Affairs has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service in Vietnam. Please contact VSO to discuss possible claim eligibility for the following conditions:

- **AL Amyloidosis**
- **Chronic B-cell Leukemias**
- **Chloracne** (or similar acneform disease)
- **Diabetes Mellitus Type 2**
- **Hodgkin's Disease**
- **Ischemic Heart Disease**
- **Multiple Myeloma**
- **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma**
- **Parkinson's Disease**
- **Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset**
- **Porphyria Cutanea Tarda** (liver disorder)
- **Prostate Cancer**
- **Respiratory Cancers** (includes lung cancer)
- **Soft Tissue Sarcomas** (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma)



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Getting connected to other Veterans is easier than some may think. What follows is a list of area Veterans offices:

San Jose VA Vet Center
80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
Phone: 408-993-0729

VA San Jose Clinic
80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
Phone: 408-363-3000

VA Palo Alto Health Care System
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304-1290
Phone: 650-493-5000
Fax: 650-852-3228
www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

Individual sessions with a mental health professional are available. Call the Veteran Services Office for information: 408-918-4980.

*For a comprehensive list of county Veterans organizations, visit:
www.sccgov.org/sites/va/CVO/Pages/County-Veterans-Organizations.aspx*

BY RODNEY OROSCO



Richard Vega uses his experience to help other Veterans with PTSD.
PHOTO BY LIPO CHING

Walking the Walk

**After struggling with PTSD for more than a decade,
Veteran now helps reduce stigma around mental illness**

Twenty-two-year-old Cpl. Richard Vega did two tours in Fallujah, Iraq, about 12 months total. What the Marine experienced during those months would haunt him for more than a decade.

“I did not seek mental health treatment until 13 years after leaving the Marines,” he says. His reasons for waiting are all too common among combat Veterans.

“I didn’t fully understand the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder,” he explains. And, “I guess one of the struggles I faced was the fear of being seen as weak.”

For too long there has been a misperception that Soldiers coming home from war should be able to leave the war behind. This dangerous myth has led to many Soldiers withdrawing and never confronting the horrors they continue to face, Vega explains.

“I guess I kept the war bottled up because no one would understand what I had been through,” he says.

The result of this was far too familiar: “One of the struggles I faced after I returned home was the emotional detachment from my family,” he says.

A divorce, a subsequent broken relationship and estrangement from his children lead to Vega questioning what was going on with his mental well-being. Flashbacks, nightmares and

hypervigilance in public — he always had to be facing the doorway — pushed the troubled Soldier into seeking help.

He was lucky he did not have to go far for help — Vega works at the Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO).

“A fellow worker at the office suggested I speak with the San Jose Vet Center’s mental health counselor,” he says.

Vega followed his co-worker’s advice, and it has changed his world.

“After nine months of individual and group sessions, the Vet Center has taught me how to cope with my PTSD,” he says. “In therapy, I learned how to respond differently to the thoughts that used to get stuck in my head.”

With a first-person perspective on service-related mental illness, Vega is quick to help other vets overcome the stigma of “weakness” associated with seeking help for their PTSD.

“If there are vets who have been through traumatic events during their military service, I strongly suggest

they seek out mental health treatment,” he says.

Having the strength to seek help can change your life.

“Within months these treatments have produced positive and meaningful changes in my life,” he says. “I now have a better relationship with my family and friends.”

“
I now have a
better relationship
with my family
and friends.”

Richard Vega
Veteran Services Representative
diagnosed with PTSD

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Johnnie Mosley is grateful for the help that got him off the streets and into his own home.
PHOTO BY LIPO CHING

A Helping Hand

A vet gets a home and a second chance

Former Marine Pfc. Johnnie Mosley is brutally honest. “I did it to myself,” he says. “I put myself on the street.” A four-year tour in the Marines in the 1980s provided the young man fresh out of high school some discipline, some freedom — and some problems. “I was bad when I got out,” he says. “My family said I was angry and they had to turn away from me.”

The San Jose Veteran hit rock bottom in 2007 when he began his life on the streets.

By 2014, he looked around and decided he needed a change.

“I did a self-check and thought, ‘Man, I can’t live like this anymore!’” he says. “I had to stop this pity party.”

Mosley, like many Veterans, believed services were not available to him. And, like other Veterans who do not seek help, Mosley believed the people at the centers were less than helpful.

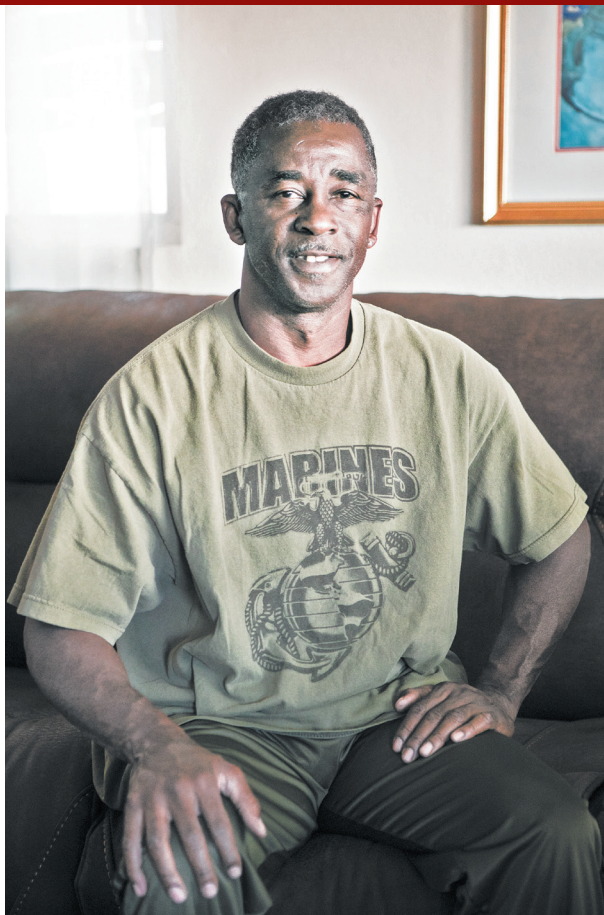
His desire to change his life, to take back control, led him into a Veteran’s center in San Jose.

Hoping to find an answer to his problems put him through the front door and down a new path.

“I went into that center and connected with quite a few people, especially Kelly,” he says. It was a great connection.

The Kelly he happened to meet, Kelly Sumner, is the Director of Veterans Services for HomeFirst.

“HomeFirst has a breadth of programs to support Veterans in their housing stability,” Sumner says. The program Mosley



was part of is called Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).

Within three months of walking into the vet center, Mosley was in an apartment.

“I found my own place, and they went with me to meet with the landlord about renting it,” Mosley explains. That meeting resulted in a surprise for the vet looking for a second chance.

“I’m sitting there with the landlord and a HomeFirst person, and the HomeFirst person said they would pay the deposit and nine months of rent,” he says. “I started crying like a baby. This was a true blessing.”

The SSVF program is part of a VA grant designed to house homeless Veterans. HomeFirst and Goodwill of Silicon Valley both offer SSVF programs.

The program provides housing to homeless Veterans with no strings attached. “We support securing housing for Veterans without preconditions or barriers such as mandatory employment, or

sobriety,” Sumner explains.

“I appreciate this program,” Mosley says. “It changed my life.”

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This was a true blessing.

Johnnie Mosley

Veteran who had experienced homelessness

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CALLING ALL LANDLORDS

Renting to a Veteran is an investment in Santa Clara County. With more than 700 homeless Veterans in the county, landlords can make a difference by participating in Santa Clara County’s rental program for Veterans.

The program offers incentives for renting to Veterans, including:

- **Bonuses (Gratitude Payment):** Landlords can earn a bonus of up to \$1,500 for renting to a Veteran.
- **Control of tenant selection:** Landlords can screen and select their tenants.
- **A support team:** Landlords have a team to help them navigate the process and respond to any questions that may arise.
- **Secured rent:** Rent will be paid until the veteran is able to pay on their own.
- **Rental Guaranteed Fund:** Potential assistance with additional housing costs.
- **Paying it back:** Paying the debt owed to those who sacrificed to protect our freedom.





GET THE ID!

Santa Clara County Veterans who were honorably discharged may be eligible to receive a free Veterans ID Card and a Veteran designation on their California Driver's License. Both are available by contacting the VSO office. The process is quick and easy, and benefits include discounts at participating merchants and recognition of your service from your community. **Call or visit the VSO today to get started!**



We Get Vets

Santa Clara County Veteran Services Office (VSO) understands the needs of Veterans here in Santa Clara County. Whether you served in Vietnam or Afghanistan, whether you served in a war or at home — **you earned benefits.**

Connect with Us!

In person:

68 N. Winchester Blvd.
Santa Clara, CA 95050.
Open from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-5 p.m.
Monday-Friday (appointments preferred)

Online:

www.sccgov.org/sites/va/pages/office-of-veterans-services.aspx

Phone:

408-918-4980 (call for appointment)

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/SantaClaraCountyVSO/