



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
*Syracuse VA Medical Center*  
800 Irving Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13210

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(for immediate release)

***VA & HUD Join Together to Support Homeless Veterans!***

**VA & HUD ANNOUNCE THAT 30 HOMELESS VETERANS  
HAVE FOUND PERMANENT HOUSING IN ROME, NY**

*HUD-VASH program in NYS has provided Housing for over 300 Veterans*

NEW YORK – Regional Administrator Adolfo Carrión announced today that 30 homeless veterans have found permanent housing in and around Rome, New York under a joint HUD and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program that provides rental housing and support services to needy veterans. Since the program’s inception in 2008, 329 homeless veterans in upstate and central New York have found permanent housing. The VA estimates that there are approximately 131,000 homeless veterans on any given night in America.

“I am proud of the work we are doing to house homeless veterans. These men and women who have served and sacrificed so much for our country deserve nothing less from us,” said Carrión. “Working with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, we are doing our part to provide these veterans the housing and the tools they need to gain self-sufficiency. I can think of no better gift at the onset of winter than a safe and secure home for our most deserving fellow Americans.”

HUD’s *Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH)* combines a HUD Housing Choice Voucher with VA case management and supportive services. This program connects homeless veterans from local Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMC) with HUD rental assistance vouchers provided by local public housing agencies. VA Medical Centers identify eligible candidates for public housing authorities, which administer the vouchers.

One local veteran who benefited from the HUD-VASH program was *Colleen* who relocated to this area from Florida to be near her aging parents. Colleen had minimal income and was staying with friends when she met Mark Nowakowski, a Licensed Certified Social Worker with the VA in Rome. Mark was able to help her find housing, as well as assist her obtain various VA benefits which included a Service Connected (SC) claim for her injuries, which she sustained during her time of service. Mark worked with Maureen Birmingham, Leased Housing Coordinator at the Rome Housing Authority, to assist Colleen in obtaining a HUD-VASH voucher. Ms. Birmingham was able to allow Colleen to transport the voucher to Mohawk, New York, where she lives in her own apartment.

After securing housing, Colleen started to address the issues that were adversely impacting on her life. She began to become more active in community events and started educating community self-help groups on veterans' issues. She has been so successful in this endeavor that she has been invited to three separate retreats for "Women in the Military." Colleen's work in helping other veterans was even showcased on a recent NPR (National Public Radio) radio show. She is on the path toward self-sufficiency and is a happy and active community member.

"HUD-VASH provides us with an opportunity to help veterans who are homeless get back on their feet," said Mr. Nowakowski. "It is a wrap-around service program that allows clinicians, such as myself, to assist the veteran and their family to reconnect with society and each other, better their lives, and give them hope for the future. It is the least we can do for them, given the sacrifices they made in serving their country."

"The HUD-VASH program ensures that the veterans have decent, safe and affordable housing for themselves and families," said Ms. Birmingham. "One of the positive aspects of a VASH Voucher is that it allows the veteran to find housing that they choose, even in cases where it is not in Rome's jurisdiction. For those veterans who choose to live outside of Rome's jurisdiction, we simply transfer their paperwork to the appropriate Housing Authority and their rental assistance transfers at that time. It has been a pleasure working with the veterans of our area and witnessing that they now have a place they can call home."

In addition to the Rome Housing Authority, the Syracuse Housing Authority has found permanent housing for 56 homeless veterans, the Albany Housing Authority 82 veterans, the Rochester Housing Authority 68 veterans, and the Town of Amherst 93 veterans.

HUD allocates the housing vouchers to local public housing agencies, which are specifically targeted to homeless veterans based on a variety of factors, including the number of reported homeless veterans and the proximity of a local VAMC with the capacity to provide case management. Local communities that receive HUD homeless assistance will work with local VAMCs to identify eligible participants. VAMC case managers will also work directly with local housing agencies that are administering the HUD-VASH program to determine income eligibility and help participants find suitable housing. Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program rent privately owned housing and generally contribute no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. The VA offers eligible homeless veterans clinical and supportive services through its medical centers across the U.S and Puerto Rico.

This is the third year HUD is supporting the housing and service needs of homeless veterans across America through HUD-VASH with a total investment of \$225 million that will sustain approximately 30,000 rental assistance vouchers.

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