

TALLAHASSEE VETERAN ORGANIZATION

STAND DOWN 2026

AFTER-ACTION REPORT

OVERVIEW

Stand Down (SD) 2026 was a collaborative effort led by the Tallahassee Veteran Organization (TVO) and numerous community social, health, and human service providers to support homeless and at-risk veterans throughout Leon County and the Big Bend region.

The event provided a wide range of services designed to address immediate needs and promote long-term stability. Services included financial guidance, housing assistance, medical, mental health, wellness resources, legal aid, and personal hygiene items.

EVENT

Stand Down 2026 was held on May 15–16, 2026, at the Florida A&M University Alfred B. Lawson Multipurpose Center, located at 1800 Althea Gibson Way, Tallahassee, Florida.

A total of 322 veterans received services during the two-day event. Forty partner agencies and organizations participated, providing a comprehensive range of services and generating more than 2,000 interactions with veterans and their families.

OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony was held on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. at the FAMU Lawson Center.

Dr. and LTC (Ret.) Ray Mobley served as Master of Ceremonies.

Invitations were extended to local elected officials and the presidents of Florida A&M University, Florida State University, and Tallahassee State College.

The Leon County High School Junior NROTC Color Guard, under the direction of Gunnery Sergeant Anthony Reeves, presented the colors. The invocation was delivered by SFC (Ret.) Terrence Milton, and the National Anthem was performed by Ms. Kalilah Taite.

Guest speakers included:

- Commissioner Christian Caban, Leon County Commission
- Vianna Machese, Senior Executive Leadership Team Member, Gainesville VA Hospital

TRANSPORTATION

The City of Tallahassee's StarMetro system provided fare-free transportation services for veterans and their families traveling to and from any city bus stop.

Additionally, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles deployed its Florida Licensing on Wheels (FLOW) unit, enabling many veterans to restore or renew their driver's licenses on-site.

REGISTRATION

Pre-registration for veterans wishing to attend Stand Down 2026 was conducted online. The majority of veterans ultimately registered in person during the event.

Volunteer registration was completed through the Bookwhen online platform, while vendor registration was conducted throughout the planning process.

Pre-registered veteran applications were forwarded to the Department of Veterans Affairs Enrollment and Eligibility Office for pre-screening, which helped expedite registration and service delivery during the event.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical and wellness services were provided by numerous VA and community partners, including:

VA Mental Health Clinic, VA Substance Use Disorder Unit, VA Suicide Prevention Program, DSR Public Health Foundation, Palmer College of Chiropractic, Big Bend Cares committed its mobile health unit to support veterans on Friday, May 15, 2026.

DENTAL SERVICES

Dental services and consultations were provided by Dr. Asensi, a Board-Certified dentist.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were broadcast daily on Wave 94.1 leading up to the event.

An interview featuring Stand Down Coordinator Althamese T. Smith aired on Wave 94.1 on April 22, 2026, helping promote awareness and participation.

Additional media coverage was provided by WCTV and the Tallahassee Democrat, both of which conducted interviews and reported live from Stand Down 2026 on May 15 and May 16.

FOOD SERVICES

Veterans, volunteers, and service providers enjoyed meals throughout the two-day event.

Meals were prepared by Lindy's Fried Chicken and 4 Rivers Smokehouse and were complemented by donations from Krispy Kreme, Community Coffee, and Blue Bell Ice Cream.

Additional food-related donations were provided by Sam's Club, North Florida Fairgrounds, Mitsubishi Dealership.

BARBER SERVICES

Barber and grooming services were provided by Lively Barber School, North Florida Cosmetology and a local barber. They served more than 39 veterans.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Palmer College of Chiropractic provided chiropractic evaluations, treatments, soft tissue therapy, and mechanical massage services to 56 veterans.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

More than 25 veterans received housing assistance or referrals through HUD-VASH and other VA housing programs.

SECOND HARVEST OF THE BIG BEND

Second Harvest of the Big Bend distributed 300 pre-packaged, non-perishable meal kits to veterans attending Stand Down 2026.

BOMBAS, LLC

Bombas, LLC has given away over 2,000 pairs of socks to Stand Down over the past 3 years.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

CareerSource Capital Region provided employment-related assistance and workforce development services to 14 veterans and their family members.

VETERAN CLAIMS AND BENEFITS

Leon County Veterans Services provided information regarding veteran benefits, online benefit applications, and transportation assistance through Metro bus passes.

More than 60 veterans and family members received assistance.

LEGAL SERVICES

Legal Services of North Florida provided legal consultations and support services to more than 48 veterans.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Maria Renzulli provided event photography throughout the two-day event, capturing veterans, volunteers, service providers, and community partners.

Photographs from Stand Down 2026 are available on the Tallahassee Veteran Organization website.

SPONSORS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Stand Down 2026 was made possible through the generous financial support, in-kind donations, and services provided by the following organizations:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Leon County Government
- City of Tallahassee
- Florida A&M University
- Tallahassee State College
- WellCare
- BPOE Elks
- Cumulus Radio
- Wave 94.1
- Palmer College of Chiropractic

- Second Harvest of the Big Bend
- Community Coffee
- Blue Bell Ice Cream
- Bombas, LLC

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Tallahassee Veteran Organization extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to every sponsor, volunteer, service provider, donor, and community partner who contributed to the success of Stand Down 2026.

Their commitment and dedication helped ensure that veterans throughout the Big Bend region received critical services, resources, and support.

TVO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Donna Barron, President & Stand Down 2026 Director

COL (Ret.) Washington Sanchez Jr., Vice President/Treasurer & Stand Down 2026 Assistant Director

Carla Dean, Secretary

LTC (Ret.) Dr. Ray Mobley, Board Member

GySgt (Ret.) Anthony Reeves, Board Member

Althamese T. Smith, Event Coordinator